

LOUIS DE BONCŒUR.

A

DOMESTICK TALE.



BY CATHERINE LARA.



VOL II.

“ — Quis talia fando
“ Temperet à lachrymis ? ”

Who could withhold a tear at such a tale ?

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LOUIS DE BONCŒUR.

LETTER XII.

Louis de Boncœur to the Marquis de

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THE melancholy event my wife had communicated to me was soon known throughout the family. I went twenty times into my father's chamber, and into that of the companion of his flight, vainly expecting to meet with somewhat that might elucidate their projects. I ran wildly into every room of the house, scarcely stopping to breathe, and tumbling over every thing that obstructed my passage. At length, over-powered by my exertions, and the acuteness of my grief, I sunk senseless into my wife's arms, who had endeavoured to follow me: but finding her strength inadequate, stopped in Mrs.

de Rozieres's room, which was the last I entered.

At the sight of Mrs. de Boncœur my feelings tortured me almost to madness. "You see," she said to her mother, with an air of triumph, "time discovers all things, we are not to judge from assertion, but from conduct."

"Conduct!" I exclaimed with indignation, rising from my seat with a look that I suppose expressed the utmost fury, as she retreated several steps, and Mrs. de Rozieres and Henrietta placed themselves before me. "Your conduct, Madam," I said, resuming my seat, "I leave to the judgment of your conscience; and, if barbarity is not the reigning sentiment of your heart, it will invariably reproach you with rendering a family unfortunate, who expected additional happiness from an union with your's."

The tearful eyes and suffused cheeks of Mrs. de Rozieres, and my Henrietta, made me feel the unjust severity of my reproach the moment it escaped my lips; but in the state I was, I could not express my sorrow for having offended

fended them: an abundant gush of tears relieved my bursting heart.

"Grief," said they with the utmost kindness, "may render a person apparently unjust, and excessive sensibility will not leave the heart the liberty of choosing the expressions that may relieve the acuteness of its agonies: those that may alleviate your's we will listen to with resignation, as sincere as our desire to afford you consolation, for not a sigh escapes your bosom but excites one equally poignant from our's."

"Ah! my dear friends," I said, greatly comforted, "pardon a senseless being, who no longer knows what he says or does. Your friendship and affection is now the only solace left me."

The unfortunate are easily reconciled; we mutually embraced each other, and an interchange of kisses was the token of an affectionate attachment our hearts acknowledged.

If unhappiness is the heavy lot of weak humanity, why is it not lightened by participation? Our's was equal among us three, our loss was the same,

Mrs. de Boncœur was the only one who did not seem to feel it; the tender effusions of our hearts produced no effect on her's; and I was going to animadvert severely on her conduct, when we received a note from her, purporting a wish to converse with us on the subject of our woes: though from her manner it might readily have been supposed she was a perfect stranger to the event that had driven us to despair.

"Domestic divisions," she said, "should never go beyond the limits of the family in which they occur; for our and your father's honour his flight must be concealed from every one: we can say he is gone to court to thank his majesty for the favours lately bestowed on him; and his mysterious manner of going may be said to have arisen from the desire of avoiding the pain attending a formal departure."

"Madam," I replied with much acrimony, "it would have been better to have prevented those unhappy events which compel us now to dissimulate; the truth will soon be discovered. Should not our evident grief

“ grief betray us, our shrieks, on the
“ first intelligence, sufficiently inform-
“ ed the servants of what had occur-
“ red; and, from my subsequent in-
“ quiries of them, it is impossible they
“ can be ignorant of the cause of our
“ sorrow.”

“ It is not from them,” she answer-
“ ed, “ I wish to conceal it; they
“ are discreet, faithful, and strongly
“ attached to you: my motive is only,
“ that such a plan as I have suggested,
“ should be followed with those who
“ may inquire into the cause of your
“ father’s precipitate journey.”

“ I consent, Madam, to strangers
“ being deceived in this way as long
“ as you please; but do you suppose
“ I shall remain in uncertainty? that
“ your mother and sister can tranquil-
“ lize their minds as to the fate of a
“ person so dear to them, or that we
“ can live under such an insupportable
“ separation? No, it is impossible for
“ hearts so feeling as our’s. You,
“ Madam, who are so ingenious in
“ dissipating the suspicion of our
“ neighbours, would be better em-
“ ployed in devising some means to

re-unite those whose happiness consists in each other's society.

"I hope," said Mrs. de Boncœur, with an unusual degree of affection, "he will soon find the necessity of seeking your society; it is impossible to be easily reconciled to the loss of a son like you, and the powerful influence of virtue will soon recall him to a sense of his error, which I consider to be more from the seduction of his senses, than a voluntary defalcation from right; at any rate, however, should he persist in his error, there are certain positive and effectual means——" Here I interrupted her to ask what were these certain means, as I, from her manner, conceived them to be violent, but just as she was going to reply, a servant announced the arrival of young de Rozières.

The most dreadful apparition could not have alarmed me more than this intelligence. I knew the violence of his temper, and excessive attachment to his sisters. If solely on suspicion he proceeded with such violence against me, what was I not to dread from his
impe-

impetuosity when he came to a knowledge of the insult my father had committed against his sister.

I From the alarm and perplexity his presence occasioned to me, I would willingly have consented to live separate from my father and family during a year, if by such means I could have got him at once away from the house; but what pretext could I employ to procure so desirable an event? and, on the other hand, I could not expect what had occurred would be long concealed from him; indeed, I was inclined to think it was the object of his visit, supposing his sister had written to him.

The affectionate manner in which he addressed me, and the satisfaction he expressed on seeing me, manifested the injustice of my suspicions, but did not relieve me from the object of my fears; the moment of elucidation was at hand, he asked to see my father.

We neither of us returned any reply to this request. He expressed much uneasiness at our silence, which he remarked was considerably augmented by our silence.

by the melancholy gloom that overspread our countenances.

Wishing, at least, to soften an explanation, I could no longer evade, I told him my father was absent, and, from his knowledge of our extreme affection for him, he should not be astonished at our evident uneasiness. Dinner being announced happily gave me an opportunity of arranging every argument that might avert his resentment.

During our repast he asked me a number of questions, but all of them too trivial to occasion any embarrassment. From the nature of the explanation I had to make, I felt its difficulty increase as the moment of communication approached, the mode also appeared obscure, my ideas vanished, and the extreme agitation I experienced rendered it one of the most painful moments of my life.

We had all retired to the saloon, and each of us seated some time, but no opportunity of making the required disclosure offered. At one time I thought of withdrawing with Mr. de Rozieres, but the necessity there would be

be of repeating what I had to say before his mother and sisters, induced me to relinquish this idea, as it would only be multiplying a scene I wished over; whatever might be the consequences.

Besides, I feared Mrs. de Boncœur might relate her complaints to her brother in my absence; and my father's conduct could in no way be justified, or the reproaches he apparently merited rebuked, unless every concomitant circumstance was explained at the same time. My father's interest overcame my particular repugnance; I immediately resolved to make this important communication without any other preparation than endeavouring to predispose Mr. de Rozieres favourably, by assuring him, that his presence, which had, at first, occasioned me some uneasiness, now gave me as much pleasure as at any other time, since, from the circumstance which gave rise to my first disliking his visit he might greatly assist us by his services and counsel.

Thus, without enumerating fully those quarrels which might have given

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my father some advantage over his wife, I, in a few words, related the cause of our separation, calling on Mrs. de Rozieres, and Henrietta, to witness that neither my father, or myself, had ever neglected any opportunity, of preserving that happiness and peace, which was the principal object of our union.

During the time I was speaking, Mrs. de Boncœur, though apparently tranquil, and perfectly silent, her countenance seemed to indicate the most absolute indifference as to *her* brother's judgment. Henrietta, and her mother, with downcast eyes, and a sorrowful air, gave the testimony I claimed from their justice, but the calmness Mr. de Rozieres preserved seemed incomprehensible, if he was not meditating some dreadful vengeance.

I was suffering the most acute sensations, when Mr. de Rozieres, after looking at each of us alternately with some attention, burst into a laugh, which he continued, at different intervals, so loud and long, that I positively thought his intellects were deranged.

After having indulged himself in this unexpected merriment, he apologized
to

to us for not having been able to restrain himself at seeing us so dejected and grave for a common event: which notwithstanding our lamentations, he could not but consider as a very pleasant adventure.

Mrs. de Rozieres assuming a serious tone, without any severity, told her son she could not conceive how an event, that had occasioned sorrow and uneasiness to every individual composing the family, could appear to him a subject of jocularity. His favourite sister, Henrietta, could not refrain from expressing her improbation of his conduct; my sister, Hortensia, also manifested her dislike, and her down-cast eyes intimated that one who treated the duties of marriage so lightly, was not likely to afford her much happiness in that state. Mrs. de Boncœur made her usual reply—a contemptuous smile; we were, however, uncertain whether it was applied to her brother's conduct, or the subsequent observations.

I was the only one, who, from the terror I had been impressed with, that was pleased at Mr. de Rozieres's ridicule; freed from the dread his impetu-

osity

osity had excited, I readily consented to his laughing at an event that racked my heart ; and profiting by the advantage he had given me over him, I told him, that my father's flight, which he, no doubt, considered as a gallant intrigue, and, consequently, a subject of mirth to a young officer, was, however, a very serious offence when perpetrated by a respectable magistrate, and the father of a family ; that it was absolutely necessary we should exert our combined efforts, to conceal from the publick an event the publicity of which would equally affect us all ; that Mrs. de Boncœur had already made the observation : we, therefore, requested him to assist us with his endeavours to find my father, and persuade him to return, as his separation from his wife could not remain secret much longer.

Mr. de Rozieres again offered his excuses for his conduct, and confessed that persons, who, from their situation and birth, ought to set an example of right to others, should not, if it could be prevented, become the subject of scandal : and that he should not have laughed at the event, which, though he did not
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consider it of any consequence, as the result would prove, had we treated it with less seriousness.

Without deigning a reply to such miserable observations, in which reason and propriety were equally insulted, I requested that every one present would favour me with their advice, in order to avert the ill effects that might arise from my father's conduct; as every moment's delay was an irreparable loss; then addressing myself directly to Mrs. de Rozieres, I intreated her to speak first, conceiving it was right to pay that attention to her age and experience.

“ The reasons you assign,” she said,
“ are such as I must urge for not explaining myself first; the respect
“ entertained for me by every one present, may induce you to prefer my
“ opinions to your own, and I wish
“ that every one should communicate
“ their thoughts on a subject in which
“ we are equally interested. I therefore
“ require, that the youngest
“ amongst us should open this important discussion, and, perhaps, we
“ may obtain more assistance from the
“ artless

"artless suggestions of nature, than
 "the uncertain conjectures of expe-
 "rience, often drawn from very oppo-
 "site examples, and certainly not ade-
 "quate to direct us in circumstances
 "that, perhaps, have never before oc-
 "curred exactly similar. Hortensia
 "being thus pressed to
 "give her opinion, said, she did not
 "doubt of success, if we were to employ
 "in this negotiation, the respectable Cur-
 "rate of ~~Paris~~, who had been the
 "guardian of my father's youth; and had
 "therefore considerable claim on his gra-
 "titude; and this venerable pastor's zeal,
 "aided by the arguments he would em-
 "ploy from religion and morality, would
 "probably be the most effectual means of
 "restoring a beloved parent to his dis-
 "consolate family. Hortensia's
 "advice was exactly that
 "of a young person who had just left
 "the convent, and supposed it was im-
 "possible to resist a spiritual director.
 "Although we did not expect to derive
 "any advantage from it, we nevertheless
 "thanked her; Mr. de Rozières's, how-
 "ever, was still more ridiculous and less
 "circumspect.

Assuming

Assuming a grave air, which he thought appropriate to the situation of a judge; (for such he imagined himself to be) He said, “the passions of the human heart are only to be destroyed by each other, and from this incontrovertible principle I conclude, that, in order to make Mr. de Boncœur renounce the fair who has led him captive, we must try to excite his passions by some other woman more amiable, younger, and more bewitching manners, which will make him forget his present mistress, whom I consider more dangerous from her artifices than her power of pleasing; if he has chosen, as is most probable, the capital for an asylum, as a more convenient place for pursuing the line of conduct he seems to have projected, we shall easily find him at some one of the theatres, or, perhaps, at some well-known house of pleasure, whose beauteous mistress, for four or five hundred louis-d’ors, has undertaken to instruct him in every requisite for acquitting himself brilliantly in his new career. These respectable go-
“vernesses

“ verneſſes are not gold-proof, and,
“ for ſome handsome preſent from us,
“ will relinquish her charge. If this
“ ſhould be the caſe, we ſhall, no
“ doubt, find him a finiſhed beau, and
“ not the Gothick huſband he was; an
“ advantageous change which certainly
“ could not have been effected but
“ by this gallant exploit.”

I was burning with indignation during the delivery of this odious ribaldry, in which decency was wounded, and my father injured. It was with the utmoſt difficulty I reſtrained my anger; but my father's intereſt, which was more dear to me, in proportion as he was reviled, was the powerful motive; it was not by violence I could expect to win them in his favour, and I ſhould have been guilty of rendering what I wiſhed to amend, worſe, if I had excited enmity among theſe relatives; while conſulting on the means of eſtabliſhing harmony.

I therefore left Mrs. de Rozières to inform her ſon how much he had offended the laws of decency, the reputation of my father, and his ſiſter's delicacy, and, without noticing his diſgraceful

graceful advice further, she requested Henrietta to deliver her opinion, who said, she could not suggest any better mode, than to endeavour, by solicitations and presents, to induce Mrs. de Charmes to leave my father, he then would hasten to his family, either from inclination, or to seek consolation for the loss he would sustain.

Mrs. de Boncœur, tired of listening to such various schemes, said, she was astonished to find we were none willing to have recourse to the proper authority against intriguers, and we should then be freed, at once, by the exertion of the law, from an infamous adventurer.

Highly irritated at this proposal, I protested my father should not be vexed by such proceedings, nor would we go to such extremities against a person, whom my father had considered worthy of his esteem and protection.

“*Protection and esteem,*” replied she, with her usual disdainful smile, “are exactly those convenient terms which were habitual to her, and always disgusting to me——”

Mr.

Mr. de Rozières, who saw my sufferings, interrupted her by saying, "if your husband was rather too tenderly attached to this woman, it is one of those insuperable weaknesses that never are permanent, and should be attributed to the inconsistency attendant on human nature; who has not, in their life, been subjected to the dominion of their passions? The most wise—"
 "I know, Sir," she exclaimed, "it is your accustomed mode of exculpation, to lay all your faults to love; a prostituted term which you employ as a veil for your violences and follies."

Then, as if the subject we were discussing was not of the least importance, she turned to her *forté piano*, and began playing an air, with as much ease and tranquillity, as if we had met merely to listen to her.
 There was scarcely a moment in the day but this strange woman excited my anger to such a degree, as to require all my patience to restrain it; this, however, I could not contain, and rising

sing with impetuosity, I seized her chair, and turned her with it towards those present, saying, I expected and hoped she would attend to what her mother, who had not yet delivered her opinion, might advise.

"Ah!" said Mrs. de Rozieres, looking at me with a sorrowful air, "what can I say, that I have not already repeated too often without effect; and now, when my advice might be of some advantage, it is contemned, and we remain the victims of a sullen perverseness, which I have vainly endeavoured to remove."

Mrs. de Rozieres made several other affecting remarks, without the least asperity; but Mrs. de Boncour paid not the smallest attention, but with her eyes bent on the *forté piano*, and her head resting on her hand, she continued touching the keys of the instrument, as if trying its tunes.

I was resolved to retire, that I might by myself give vent to the grief with which I was oppressed, but heaven would not subject me to trials beyond my power. At the moment I was almost

most despairing, a letter was brought to me by a servant from my father.

Whatever it might contain, I at that instant considered it as a gift from heaven to prevent the effects of my desperation, and on my knees I returned thanks, while I was breaking the seal.

The moment I saw my father's name, I pressed it to my lips, but my eyes filled with tears almost prevented me from distinguishing the characters. After repeated trials to check my tears, I at length succeeded, and read his kind excuses for not communicating to me his departure; he was fearful I should have opposed it; he then continued to inform me how he had proceeded; he went to Paris, from thence to Versailles, to thank the King for the favours he had received, and intreat him to accept his reasons for resigning the magistracy, and refusing those dignities he had lately conferred on him. The circumstances that had compelled him to abandon his house so suddenly, he said, were explained in an enclosed letter. In my agitation I had dropt this on opening the other, without observing it; but judge of my astonishment on taking it up,

up, to find it was written by Mrs. de Boncœur; but after reading the date and some lines of it, I found it was that she wrote to him previous to his departure.

The contents were these, she begged him to consent voluntarily to a separation, now become indispensable, and on which she was so irreversibly determined; that whatever repugnance she might have to excite publick remark, she was resolved to demand it juridically, if he refused his assent; she gave him three days to consider, and return an answer.

Though this woman's incorrigible pride, prevented her from using the least reproach, anger marked each line, and the asperity of her expressions, betrayed the violence that had dictated them.

My father, in his letter, added, he thought it better to leave his house, than drive her he had made mistress of it away; that he left her absolute power to regulate the revenue and expenditure, and his only regret was being separated from Mrs. de Rozieres, whose friendship he hoped he had not forfeited.

Farewell.

LETTER XIII.

To the same.

THE two letters mentioned in my last, I carried instantly to Mrs. de Rozières, who no sooner cast her eyes over them, than they were suffused with tears; and thus prevented from reading, she gave them to Mrs. de Boncœur, who read them aloud without the least apparent alteration, and then returned them to me, with an affectation of politeness more insulting to my feelings than the grossest language.

Repeated sighs burst from my oppressed heart, which relieving me, I exclaimed, "It is determined then; and the union from which there were so many reasons to expect a refined and permanent happiness is dissolved; decorum is disregarded, and the chain of duty broken, never to be again united, while each party is led away by passion: peace and tranquillity are for ever banished from my unhappy family, by the line of conduct my father seems to have adopted."

I had invariably endeavoured to conceal his weakness, and it was not one of the least causes of my vexation, to hear Mrs. de Rozières, her son, Henrietta, and even my sister give their advice, upon the supposition of an established intimacy between Mrs. de Charmes and my father; I could not, however, offer the smallest excuse, nor was there the least reason to deny it; in his letter he did not even make any attempt to justify his proceedings; he made no mention of his return, and his silence on this point deeply affected me, as it seemed he imagined I could live absent from him; it is true he did not forbid my joining him, but he knew an order to that effect would have afforded me great consolation, yet, as he was aware of my extreme submission to his most trifling wish, I considered this omission as a positive prohibition.

I read his letter again, and though it had given me so much pleasure when I first received it, it now excited fresh alarms in my already agitated mind, by its conciseness and frigidness of expression; I could not absolutely tax him with indifference, but his sentiments

were widely different from that lively, and animated tenderness, which had invariably been the soul of all our actions.

Ingenious in tormenting and consoling myself alternately, as is commonly the case in extreme affliction, I began to think I was alarmed without cause; the haste in which he travelled, and the inconvenience of the place in which he wrote, might have prevented him from expressing himself more fully. He, no doubt, reserved his protestations of unalterable attachment until we should meet. Even his silence I considered as an intimation that I should join him. If this was not his intention I imagined he would have expressed it.

However I read this plain and simple letter more than a dozen times, and attempted more interpretations and comments, than the most mysterious and abstract work might have suggested. The concluding lines, on the last perusal, appeared to me more affectionate than they had before; this was enough to fix my resolution of going to him; my presence appeared absolutely requisite, both to excuse him to the king, and prevent him

him from forgetting too soon, his family and its concerns.

Notwithstanding my eagerness to join my father, I was detained for some days in giving various and necessary orders for the administration of our affairs, and instructions to my Henrietta, who much wished to accompany me; but I at length impressed her with the necessity of remaining, that she might restrain her sister's violent resolutions, watch Hortensia's inexperience, console her mother, and amuse her brother, whom it was necessary to retain in our interest.

She agreed in the propriety of my observations, and suffered me to go without her; the melancholy, however, she manifested at my departure was so profound, that I at this moment think she foresaw the unhappy consequences that resulted from this journey. I only embraced my wife and sister, wishing to avoid exciting painful ideas in Mrs. de Rozieres's mind, and the chance of being affronted by Mrs. de Boncœur.

Could I have inspired the hundredth part of the love I had for this idolized parent, every one would have been as

eager to get to him as myself. The rapidity of my travelling was equal to my impatience, and I had effected three parts of my journey, without ever thinking I knew not precisely where to find him: this reflection, however, did not retard my proceeding with equal celerity. At every post I met certain information of which road my father had taken, and I conceived the most recent their traces were, the easier I should discover them; but I lost them entirely on arriving at the gates of Paris, where they had taken a hackney-coach, to convey them to where they intended to reside.

My father, however, having been with the minister to return thanks, and excuse himself, it appeared probable I should most likely hear of him there.

Under this idea, I hastened to Versailles, where, having drest myself, I went to Mr. de Louvois the minister, whom I found extremely irritated against my father;—"we have not seen him," he said, "his shunning the King is not, however, his worst act; for we know he has been in Paris for some days, with a woman of too much notoriety to be long concealed; the

“ she is a needy adventurer, who had
“ the insolence to pretend to be the
“ wife of the Duke de ———. She
“ shall soon receive the reward of her
“ temerity.”

The angry tone in which the minister spoke, so alarmed me, that I was incapable of answering, or offering to justify my father; and leaving me without attempting to console me, I retired overwhelmed with melancholy. Fearful of reviving the King's answer, I resolved not to see him, and immediately returned to Paris though it was very late, and went to the ready furnished lodgings I generally occupied.

Sleep fled my eyes, I passed the night in revolving the painful reflections these strange events gave rise to. I arose at break of day, and went out as soon as I thought I could meet any one at the publick walks, thinking I might there find my father, or discover some traces of him.

We had some friends and relations, whom, when my engagements at other times called me to Paris, I always visited; but it was not probable my father had been with them, and fearful of dis-

covering what I wished to conceal, I made no inquiries of them.

After having ineffectually traversed the city until near three o'clock in the afternoon, I was returning pensively home, resolved to commence my search again in the evening, when turning the corner of a street, I thought I saw my father's valet. I ran after him, and finding I was right, seized him violently by the arm, as if in the joy of having found him, I feared he might again escape me. His astonishment and satisfaction was equal to what I expressed on meeting him so happily; but it was of short duration, a sigh, and the look this worthy domestick cast to Heaven, fully informed me of the events that required all my fortitude to support.

Had I possessed less zeal and attachment, I should perhaps have left Paris immediately, to avoid witnessing what would shame and grieve me; for if my intreaties and solicitations should prove useless, what resource was left? Following my guide, I ardently implored the assistance of heaven. "O, thou!
" who formed the human heart,
" and canst direct it by thy supreme
" power,

“ power, wilt thou suffer a soul that
“ has ever cherished honour and vir-
“ tue, now to sink into the abyfs of
“ debauchery and crime!”

This short invocation I had repeated several times to myself, with several other supplications equally fervent, when my conductor informed me we were arrived at my father’s lodgings ; raising my eyes, which I had kept intently on the ground, during the time I followed the servant ; I was astonished to find it was the same house in which my apartments were. I expressed my surprise at not being informed he was there, the preceding evening ; but it ceased when I was told he took them in a feigned name.

This precaution increased my alarm ; however, I was determined to learn whether they were well founded, with that resignation which religion and philosophy dictates.

I am ignorant what the emotions and extasy of two lovers agitated by fear and hope, may be, at the moment they are going to be united after a long absence ; but I am certain they cannot surpass the thrilling sensations my heart

experienced, during the short time required to announce my arrival; unable to support them, I advanced to the door of the room the servant had entered; and when he opened it to introduce me, I was in my father's arms before he could rise to receive me.

Notwithstanding his evident confusion, at being found in such a convivial state, so great a distance from his family, I could perceive he was sincerely pleased at seeing his dear son, as he called me repeatedly, while I pressed him to my bosom. He was at table, and the company seemingly inclined to gaiety and pleasure, assured me my presence would augment both, and presenting me with a glass of champagne, desired me to be seated.

My father was situated between Mrs. de Charmes, and another lady equally handsome; but they not appearing inclined to relinquish their seats, I placed the chair that was brought forward for me, opposite to them; on the right side of me there was another lady, younger and more lively than either of the other two; and on the left, a tall handsome young man, whom I soon recognized

cognized to be one of the King's guard; he was introduced to me as Mrs. de Charmes's brother, by the name of d'Ombreville: his familiar manner, protestations of friendship, and some military oaths, gave me to understand what I was to expect from his society.

There was another gentleman who sat on the other side of the younger lady, who, after the sixth glass, declined taking any more. In conversation he was reserved, but his elegant manners plainly indicated his intercourse with the polite world. I soon discovered he was the Marquis de P—.

Every one paid me the most marked attention, but more particularly the lovely woman on my right; and this made me exert myself to subdue my evident uneasiness, the more so, as it seemed to afflict my father. We all seemed mutually pleased with each other, and my eyes expressed my feelings but badly, if they did not sparkle with joy, tenderness, and respect; I say respect, particularly: for my most ardent wish was, that my father should not think he had forfeited his son's esteem, con-

ceiving it to be the only means of regaining him that of the publick.

The repeated looks my father directed to me, strongly expressed his satisfaction at seeing me; his countenance, however, plainly depicted the struggling of pleasure and pain, and notwithstanding his efforts to absorb one by the other, he could not separate the sensations; yet by endeavouring to combat them, he was incapacitated from enjoying the amusement his companions afforded, or indulging in those tender sentiments my presence excited.

In the gaiety that reigned throughout this joyous assembly, there was nothing absolutely offensive to delicacy; and if Mr. d'Ombreville would have suppressed some of his libertine remarks, which he indulged in too freely: the Marquis's conversation was on pleasing and interesting subjects. This young man, by his politeness and elegance, won my esteem.

Notwithstanding my impatience to be alone with my father, I felt some degree of dread; I had reason to think he was similarly impressed, and equally desirous

desirous of this entertainment being over. We should, in any other situation, have easily found some pretext to quit them.

What fictitious sentiment, I said to myself, has the power of checking those of nature? Is my father already so guilty that shame prevents him from giving vent to the real dictates of his heart? Can a son's presence be troublesome to him? I fixed my eyes on him, and thought I discovered I was at least not an indifferent object.

From our melancholy reflections, and consequent silence, the spirit of conversation gradually evaporated; the Marquis and d'Ombreville rose from table, and taking the two strange ladies by the hand, led them into another apartment, leaving Mrs. de Charmes with us: that her being present was disagreeable to me, she might readily have perceived by my restraint, and after asking me numberless vague questions, and receiving laconick answers, she quitted us to join the company; first making a low curtesy, as if to shew me she was aware I wished her absent.

Her presence was undoubtedly a heavy weight upon my heart, for the moment she was gone, I could not suppress those sighs that naturally burst from a bosom, relieved from a great oppression.

Seated at some distance from each other, we for some minutes were silent; my eyes were fixed on my beloved parent, whose evident embarrassment pierced my heart; when, without raising his head, he said "Well, my son,"—he could not proceed, these words seemed to have given him extreme pain in utterance, and I, who had only waited for a signal, flung myself at his feet. He strained me to his bosom with affection; but as if fearful of yielding to his tenderness, or whether my caresses confused him more, he begged me to be seated on the chair that was next to him.

"How is my daughter, your wife, and Mrs. de Rozières?" he said, in a tone of voice he endeavoured to render firm and calm. "Were they not astonished at my journey?"—"Your departure," I quickly replied, with
a view

a view to relieve him from the pain I perceived him to suffer, " your departure certainly gave them some uneasiness at the moment ; but it is now subsided into the pleasing expectation of your return." As I pronounced these words, I looked steadfastly at his countenance, hoping to discover some indication to strengthen my hopes ; his eyes, however, met mine, and we relapsed into silence.-----" I flatter myself, my dear father's health has not sustained any injury from the fatigue of his journey,"---" I am tolerably well; I am perfectly well."—" You might have suffered from the heat of the weather ?"—" Yes, the heat was excessive ; but it was but little inconvenient to me."—" As you have not been long in Paris, you cannot have undertaken any important business ?"—" No ; the few days I have been here, have barely served to recover me from the fatigue of travelling." I stopped ; seeing how painful this conversation was to him, my heart too was softened ; I cast down my eyes, sighed, and drew out my handkerchief, fearful I should require it :

it; we could neither of us utter a syllable. At length my father rose, and walked up and down the room; I followed, and we made more than thirty turns in silence. I observed he wished to gain some steps before, I slackened my pace, he carried his hand to his eyes, and quitted the room without speaking; but I did not dare follow him. I thought it my duty to respect his grief, it sunk deep into my soul; I could not dare irritate a heart already severely wounded.

After remaining for some time, fixed as it were to the spot, I retired to my chamber, where the tears I had long suppressed, flowed abundantly, and eased my swollen heart.

A letter was at this period brought me, which recognising to be from my wife, produced a remission from my anxiety; but I was far from supposing what were its contents: she informed me that on the day I left her, the lieutenant of the Maréchaussée was at our house to arrest Mrs. de Charmes, by virtue of a *lettre-de-cachet* he had just received, and wishing to execute his com-

commission with every respect and attention due to my father, (of whose absence he was ignorant,) he had undertaken this duty by himself; she added, "I cannot form any opinion on this strange event; let me intreat you not to be too hasty in forming your's:" she also requested permission to join me, if I had reason to suppose that my return with my father was not so near as she, her mother, and brother wished, who kindly assured me of their invariable attachment.

This violent proceeding greatly astonished me, and I wished I might not find one in my own family who had employed such base means; but I could not divest myself of suspicions, which every reflection rendered more than probable.

Yet how was it possible that the person I suspected, could in so short a time, have solicited and obtained a *lettre-de-cachet*. The attempt must have been made before I, or even my father left home. Great God! under such appearance of tranquillity to conceal the vilest treachery.-----No, no! such infamy appears impossible.

However,

However, from whatever source this mysterious blow was derived, delay was dangerous; perhaps rebutted in the first instance, a second attempt might be frustrated.

Ought I to inform my father, I said, of this event, and thereby increase the affliction by which he seems already borne down? The persecutions with which the object of his affection is threatened, will render her still more dear to him, and whoever might be their author, more odious.

This was exactly my own disposition. Perfidy always disgusted me; I never could conceive it was right to employ it, even against our enemies; generosity, at this moment, dispelled from my mind every idea my interest might have suggested in opposition to Mrs. de Charmes, and I resolved instantly to inform her of the odious plot designed against her. I sent to tell her I wished to speak to her on business of the greatest urgency, and was astonished to learn, on my messenger's return, that directly after dinner she went out with the rest of the company, and was not expected home till very late.

I was

I was extremely agitated, and revolving whether I should ask permission to wait on my father: when his valet came to my room, and informed me my father wished to see me in his room immediately. I flew to him---Alarmed to find him in bed, I said "Are you not?"—"I am perfectly well," he said, giving me his hand, which I pressed to my lips; "my only reason for going to bed, is, I do not wish to receive any visitors."

Perceiving I was going to take a chair, he desired me to sit on the bed, and on my declining so to do, he pulled me to him with an air of satisfaction and freedom of manner I had long been a stranger to.

"I should hope," he said, "it is not necessary I should say I am pleased to see you;" (pressing my hand between his,) "but I cannot refrain from telling you, you will only vex and torment a father who sincerely loves you, if your design, in following me here, is to persuade me to be re-united to a woman whom I never will voluntarily see again.--- My susceptibility renders me incapable

“ pable of living amidst continual wars,
“ alternately offensive and defensive;
“ they would almost make one think
“ the destiny of marriage was to be an
“ eternal punishment to each of the
“ contracting parties.”

“ I wish to end my days in tran-
“ quillity, honours are as inadequate
“ as riches, to constitute my felicity.
“ Of what consequence is it that the
“ victims of mortality should be more
“ decorated one than another! We
“ must draw our happiness from things
“ less ideal, and less deficient; I wish
“ to be substantially happy, and it is
“ from the sentiments of nature and
“ friendship alone, I expect my hopes
“ to be realized. Placed in the bosom
“ of them, I shall suffer the deceitful
“ images of greatness and pleasure to
“ glide by like vain shadows, that lessen
“ as they are approached, and disap-
“ pear when we would seize them.
“ Strange blindness of mankind, who
“ seek to render themselves ridiculous
“ by incessantly moving in a circle of
“ hopes, and conclude by falling,
“ from being exhausted and fatigued,
“ without having found a solid object
“ to

“ to which they can attach themselves.
“ Yes, my son, desire is the most
“ painful occupation Heaven has be-
“ stowed on human nature. The fable
“ of the Danaides is but a faint image
“ of an ambitious man’s mind ; it con-
“ tains every punishment ; he passes
“ his life like Sisyphus, and incessantly
“ turns on Ixion’s wheel ; and his am-
“ bition, like Prometheus’s vulture,
“ never suffers his heart to be at rest.
“ Why then should we suffer so much
“ uneasiness, pain, and torment ?—
“ Life is short, and happiness more
“ so.”

Under any other circumstances, these observations would have received my sincere applause ; but now I regretted to hear them employed in justification, or rather to authorize conduct so widely different to what my father had heretofore maintained. How strong, I thought, must be the influence that directs him. His error prevents him from seeing that the arguments he uses, are those that may be urged against him. What shameful profanation ! Never let us again reproach those uncivilized hordes, who despoiled our temples to set

set up their ridiculous idols, and afterwards prostrated themselves before them, giving them the name of the Supreme Being they had just insulted.

These melancholy reflections were passing in my mind, when my father, astonished at my silence, and the little effect his discourse (which he had, no doubt, prepared, and thought would seduce me) had produced, pressed me to speak.

On any other occasion, I should have attempted to maintain the cause of virtue with force and energy; many were the powerful and invincible arguments that occurred to my mind, yet I feared promulging them to this beloved and unhappy parent. But how could I disguise the severe means necessary to reclaim one who voluntarily commits an error, and perseveres in it?

“ You are certainly right in your
“ remark, that life is short, and hap-
“ piness more so; but what prevents
“ us from increasing it, by contri-
“ buting to that of others? Why re-
“ fuse those things by which we might
“ enrich our friends? It is neither
“ good luck, nor what is called chance,
“ that

“ that bestowed them on us, they are
“ the gift of celestial Providence, who
“ selected us to distribute them among
“ our fellow beings ; it is her who
“ arms us with authority, places us in
“ elevated situations, charges us with
“ defending the weak and innocent,
“ prescribes us those duties we call ho-
“ nours, and which titles we only merit
“ according to the use we make of
“ them.

“ Even the pleasures we sometimes
“ despise, when out of humour, are
“ but the incitement of good, and the
“ love of excellence ; at the same time
“ the genuine are the support, the en-
“ joyment, and recompense of virtue :
“ ever active, she procures them for
“ herself, as the sun emits light by its
“ own motion.

“ How are we to know these true
“ pleasures, the inexhaustible source of
“ those felicities that expand the soul
“ with pure and permanent joy ; the
“ remembrance alone of which, is as
“ delicious as the state of absolute en-
“ joyment ? How can we acquire this,
“ from those that leave only bitterness
“ and regret behind them ; and who,
“ like

“ like disguised enemies, approach us
“ with appearance of goodness, to
“ win and wound our hearts, then fly-
“ ing, leave them torn and bleeding ?

“ How are we to know them ? By
“ the motive that excites them, by the
“ good they produce, and the authority
“ they receive from the laws ; they are
“ peaceable guards, armed but for our
“ defence, and are only severe to those
“ who would infringe them ; it is under
“ their protection, we quietly exer-
“ cise that exchange of civilities and fa-
“ vours which constitute the pleasures
“ of life, the commerce of thoughts
“ and sentiments yet more agreeable
“ and sweet, which multiplies our ex-
“ istence in the opinion of others, and
“ the precious tribute of reciprocal
“ esteem that gives a pre-conception
“ of immortal joys.

“ Ah ! let us not, at a distance
“ from others, extinguish that spark
“ of divine fire entrusted to us ; let us
“ recollect we are not permitted to
“ misuse the immortal soul, which,
“ like the oyster, with indifference en-
“ closes within its shell, the precious
“ pearl, it encloses in its bosom.

“ Provi-

“ Providence has destined us to live
“ together, and has impressed us with
“ the necessity of it by our wants
“ and mutual aid ; if sometimes reason,
“ or rather pride, suggests to the
“ contrary, it is but like a flattering
“ domestick, who deceives and betrays
“ us : and after having lulled us
“ into an enchanting dream, carries us
“ sleeping to the edge of a precipice,
“ where, if no one watches us, the least
“ motion destroys our equilibrium, we
“ roll down, and the fall awakens
“ us.”

“ I understand you perfectly,” said my father, “ be not alarmed, I will never do any thing derogatory to the parent of the wise de Boncœur.”

The word “ *wise* ” appeared to me a sarcasm of the greatest acerbity ; and finding my zeal had carried me too far, I burst into tears, from the idea of having offended my father. I retired, overcome with grief and confusion, notwithstanding my father attempted to console me. On entering my room, I exclaimed, “ Would he, at any other time, have suffered me to depart ?—
“ Would he have left me a prey to
such

“ such violent distress ? No ! no, he
“ is irritated against an audacious son,
“ and will never pardon him. How
“ great is my misfortune ! He confi-
“ ders a fond son as an intrusive cen-
“ surer, whom he will exclude from
“ his society the first opportunity :
“ then left to those who are now about
“ him, and who will ultimately cor-
“ rupt him, what will become of him,
“ and of me, when separated from
“ him, without hope of recovering his
“ friendship, or regaining his con-
“ fidence ? ”

Under these melancholy impressions, I thought I could not evince more entire and ready submission, than by requesting my wife to join us, as he seemed to wish it. I immediately wrote to her to come the moment she received my letter, with the utmost dispatch, as my father, as well as myself, earnestly wished to see her.

I urged my father's anxiety to see her, with the view of impressing her with the idea of an approaching reconciliation ; though, in fact, it seemed more distant than ever : but I wished to flatter Mrs. de Rozieres, who, with
this

this expectation, might moderate her daughter's violence, and prevent her proceeding to extremities.

Adieu.

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LETTER XIV.

*The same to the same.*

**W**RITING to my wife, and the melancholy reflections my situation gave rise to, occupied the greater part of the night, and the remainder I endeavoured to pass in sleep.

" In whose divine oblivion drown'd,  
" Sore pain and weary toil grow mild,  
" Love is with kinder looks beguild,  
" And grief forgets her fondly cherish'd wound."

But in vain; it refused to touch lids imbued with tears, with its Lethean rod. I therefore quitted my pillow at break of day, and had walked about an hour in the garden adjoining the house, when some one knocked violently and repeatedly at the door; fearing it might disturb my father, I hastened to awake the porter; but little did I imagine this unexpected visit was of such importance to me as it proved.

The man who was let in, after speaking to some persons, whom he seemed to direct to wait his orders, was coming towards me, which I perceiving, went up to him, and on approaching near, I remembered to have seen him walking alone in the minister's anti-chamber, when I was last there; he asked me if my name was de Boncœur: on being answered in the affirmative, he expressed much sorrow at having an order from the King to take me to the castle of Vincennes.

He also recollected seeing me with the minister, and remarked my melancholy look, which made him suspect I was menaced with some disgrace; in consequence of which, he had desired to be invested with the commission, (which, though extremely disagreeable,) that I might be treated with every possible indulgence.

I was too certain of the King's friendship, and the minister's favour, to fear any thing from this rigour; but from the first, I imagined it was intended for one more dear to me than myself. I was soon convinced of the correctness of my suggestion, by looking at the

*lettre-*



*lettre-de-cachet*: and instantly conceiving the project of sacrificing my liberty to my father's, I resolved to profit by the officer's mistake.

To prove his promised kindness to me, he offered to wait whatever time I required to regulate my affairs; but fearing some event might occur to let him know his error, I entreated him to let us depart, the moment I had, (with his permission) written a few lines to calm the uneasiness my sudden disappearance would occasion to some persons. He told me it was not customary, but as he had only received orders to convey me to the place of my destination, he would retire into the next room, while I dressed myself, and did whatever I judged necessary.

I took advantage of this indulgence to write to my father, informing him of the severity he was threatened with, intreating him to fly as soon as possible, to employ his friends at court to appease the King, and justify his conduct; and concluded with requesting him not to be uneasy at my absence, as it was the best and only means I had of serving him.

I gave this letter to the porter, in presence of the officer, without sealing it, as a matter of little importance; but I took the precaution of writing it in English, a language perfectly familiar to us both.

I then hastened to the carriage the officer had ready, and begged him to proceed to prison with the utmost diligence, as if I was going to take possession of the most agreeable and desirable situation: surely no one ever entered one of those dreary mansions of human misery, with so much satisfaction as I did.

While on the road, the fear of my deceit being discovered, and the hope of having saved my father's liberty, excluded every other thought from my mind; but when the doors of the prison were closed on me, and I heard the bolts fastened that were to separate me for an uncertain length of time from all that was dear to me in the world, my heart was agonized, the lugubrious objects and death-like stillness that surrounded me, contributed to heighten the anguish of my reflections. Ah! my

my friend, none but those who have experienced it, can know

“ The horrors of a gloomy gaol,  
“ Unpitied and unheard; where misery moans,  
“ Where sickness pines, where thirst and hun-  
“ ger burn,  
“ And poor misfortune feels the lash of guilt.”

Think not, however, that amidst my sufferings, I felt the least regret at the sacrifice I had made to my father. No; freely would I have given my life to establish his happiness, and there were no torments, however severe, but I would have sustained, to have again seen him in the peaceful and felicitous state in which we had passed so many years; but could I be certain that even the voluntary sacrifice I had made of my liberty, would ensure his? The smallest circumstance might discover the substitution. My father, on his arrival in Paris, assumed a different name; certainly with the only view of avoiding appearing at court, where, in whatever manner his resignation and refusal might be received, he could only expect importunate solicitation, or humiliating reproach. But could he suppose he would remain long concealed, like a



common man, whose obscurity favours his concealment?

What effect might my letter have? Could he resolve to fly, like a criminal, without attempting to explain his conduct? And should he adopt the latter plan, would they, severely disposed as they were apparently towards him, listen to a justification which would only make him appear more guilty? Gracious Heaven! since when has it not been permissible to resign those offices we have long filled with dignity? To disinterestedly and modestly refuse proffered honours? Has he treated the offerer disrespectfully? Has he not accepted those he thought he merited, and evinced the most lively gratitude? Ah! if he is innocent he has nothing more to fear; it is better to have done wrong, than have enemies: the King has been privately irritated against him.

Should he escape the rigour of offended majesty, how will he avoid the seductive snares that encircle him? What am I not to fear from his weakness, surrounded by those I saw him pleased with? Perhaps already he has imbibed  
the

the poison. It is no longer doubtful, after having seen its baneful effects.— In what state can the heart be, when the mind is inebriated? And is it not the highest degree of delirium to employ moral axioms to disguise the hideousness of vice, under the attractive robes of virtue?

What a derogation for a man who had ever been respectable, from his principles and conduct! A magistrate to associate himself with boys and women of gallantry; and that, amidst such disorder that I was compelled to quit the scene! Horrid situation! Cruel necessity! If I could for some days--- He would not have repelled my affectionate suggestions; he would not have discarded from his bosom a fond and respectful son. My prayers and submission should have repaired the effects of ill-directed zeal; his interest would have suppressed my ardour, and moderated the warmth of my love; but I have left him, perhaps irritated against me, and the sentiments of nature will soon be lost in the blandishments of pleasure.

What accumulated misfortunes have at once overwhelmed a deplorable family ! And you, most wicked woman, are the cause ; your insupportable pride and haughtiness have plunged us into an abyss, from which God only knows when we shall be liberated ! And you, my wife, my dearest Henrietta, what will be your fate ? What will be your astonishment, when, expecting to embrace your husband, you learn he has disappeared as if he wished to fly from you ? What strange thoughts will agitate your mind, and distress your heart ? Pardon me, my dear wife, a single word would ease you, but that word might cost the liberty, perhaps the life of him to whom I owe my existence ! To what desperate extremes might he not be driven to see himself treated as a criminal ! No, the deed is done, I will never revoke it, you will consent and forgive the alarm a son devoted to his father may occasion you. You will love him more, it will render him dearer to you, and the delightful satisfaction of pressing such an affectionate husband to your bosom, will make you forget your pains,



pains, and share with him the fruit and glory ; may those we know suffer at being separated from each other be the greatest in reserve for us.

Several days had passed in these melancholy reflections, when I was informed the Governor intended visiting me after dinner ; not expecting this, I felt much embarrassed.

I thought it was possible, and even probable, he had never seen my father ; but he had long known his name and situation, and would he reconcile the appearance of a young man of five and twenty, with the idea he must have formed of a grave magistrate bordering on fifty ?

I had greatly neglected my dress ; my beard was full, not having been touched for six days ; it was winter, and consequently candles would be lighted early ; therefore, by placing them in a corner of the room, and wrapping my head and face under the pretence of the tooth-ach, I hoped to deceive the Governor ; add to which, I begged him to permit me to receive him in bed, but in which I had in fact

scarcely ever been during my imprisonment.

It may be considered singular, that I should employ every precaution and means to remain in a place, that others would have used to get from it; but I thought it my duty. When I heard the Governor coming at the hour he had appointed, I trembled like a criminal expecting an inexorable judge to pronounce sentence on him.

The mere thought of telling a falsehood, and I now with pain perceived that I could only elude the Governor's questions at the expense of my sincerity, affected me. He appeared; and I had so managed and disposed the light, that he could scarcely distinguish me; but if it was easy to escape his observations, it was not equally so to evade his questions; happily he only inquired after my health; and his visit, which I had considered was merely to interrogate, was only an act of civility and politeness, and perceiving his presence embarrassed me, he shortly took his leave, assuring me every thing within the limits of his power, that could render my captivity more supportable, I might freely command.

This

This event, which I had much dreaded, afforded me double consolation, from the manner it had passed, and the proof it gave me, how mildly my father would be treated, should he unfortunately fall into the situation I had rescued him from.

I had been long in confinement; the idea that my father was enjoying the liberty I had procured him, afforded me the most pleasing reflections, and lessened the gloomy horrors of my seclusion; but yet his indifference, and its probable cause deeply affected me. Enjoying tumultuous pleasures in the society he had selected, his son, whom he only considered as a rigid preceptor, and an insupportable censor, was forgotten; and if his heart was thus steeled against the object of his once most fond attentions, what could I suppose to be his treatment of those less dear to him?

But without leading you round the whole circle of my hopes and anxieties, I passed nine months in this continual punishment, by which my health was so much impaired, that I should shortly have sunk into the silent tomb.



I required, however, both strength of mind and body to sustain the accumulated woes preparing for me; but let us not anticipate the time: I have so many melancholy occurrences to relate, that I cannot be too exact in arranging them; indeed they recur so readily and frequently to my mind, as to require all my fortitude in repelling them, fearful they should affect my intellects. I do not apprehend I shall forget the most minute circumstance, my heart will assist my memory, nothing has escaped it, I only fear its too great susceptibility will destroy the necessary tranquillity to detail my sufferings coherently.

The excellent Prince I had the honour of attending, noticed my absence, inquired if any accident had occurred to me, and if I had delegated any one in my stead, but not receiving any positive answer, he ordered instant inquiry to be made.

Several days passing without receiving any satisfactory intelligence, he became extremely angry, sent for the lieutenant of the police, and personally commanded him to discover where I was, regardless of every expense.

He

He soon found out where I had lived, and immediately summoned the master of the house, who informed him, I went out one morning with a man whom he knew to be a police officer, who had since been at his house again upon a similar commission; that my father quitted his residence the same evening with a lady; that two other ladies called to inquire for me four days after, who appeared greatly surprised and afflicted, and after abiding two days without being able to trace us, they returned to — where they ordered him to send any intelligence he might learn, but nothing having occurred he had never written to them.

The officer who had arrested me, was then sent for to give an account of his commission, but the lieutenant not being able to develope this apparent mystery; not supposing I should voluntarily go into captivity, came instantly to Vincennes, where it was soon elucidated. My liberty followed this explanation, and the first use I made of it was to hasten, and on my knees thank the excellent monarch who bestowed it on me.

I had scarcely entered his chamber, but he recognized me amidst the crowd  
of

of courtiers that surrounded him, and beckoned me to approach; I was instantly at his feet. He was already informed of what had passed, and raising me up, he pressed his hands to my lips, and looked at me with such an expression of tenderness, that tears trickled down my cheeks. In this agitation I again flung myself at his feet. "Excellent man!" he said, extending his arms to raise me; then turning to the noblemen, he continued, "I would give half my life to reign the other part only over such men as this; Boncœur you have excited the most delightful sensations I ever felt, but you shall also be happy if it depends on me."—"Sire, one word will effect it."—"I understand you, go seek your father, tell him I can never hate the man to whom you owe your existence; it is the only action of his life I shall ever remember, and both your and his happiness is forever established, if you will leave it to my care."

The sudden transition from sorrow to pleasure this occasioned, was too violent for my feelings, and finding my strength



strength to fail me, I hastened from his Majesty, unable to express my gratitude but by a low bow.

In fact, I had scarcely passed the first anti-chamber when I was compelled to sit down, almost deprived of sense; some spirituous cordial soon restored my spirits, when I found myself surrounded by a number of noblemen, who loaded me with praises. The paleness of my countenance, and the traces of tears on my cheeks, I fancy excited a considerable degree of interest, for several seemed to be really affected at my appearance.

Surely I had only performed a common and very natural action, but the marked approbation of the King heightened its value: such should ever be the conduct of a monarch, it excites emulation in the cause of virtue of which his praise is the recompence. From the great effect this produced, I am certain that at the first moment of enthusiasm, there was not one of the spectators, not even the least generous of them, who did not wish to be in my situation.

As

As to myself, I only wished to escape their caresses and solicitations, that I might indulge in the pleasing sensations that pervaded my heart.

But where was I to find the objects of my wishes? Another woman had accompanied my wife; had Mrs. de Rozieres abandoned her eldest daughter to her incorrigible pride? Was she so generous as to prefer her son-in-law, to seek him, and unite herself with the unhappy?

I repaired to my old apartments, where the landlord only informed me, that the two ladies had not mentioned their names; they seemed to be nearly of an age, and from the friendship they seemed to have for each other, he supposed they were sisters.

“What!” I exclaimed, “is it possible Mrs. de Boncœur, could relax from her natural obstinacy—But cannot the Divine Being alter our hearts? He may have reclaimed my father’s, would the King otherwise have yielded to my solicitations; I have destroyed every thing by opposing myself to his just decrees!

“False

“ False prudence ! luckless sensibility !  
“ ye have deceived me ! Great God !  
“ could I foresee I should regret the  
“ sacrifice I made ! ”

But why afflict myself without positive cause ? If Mrs. de Boncœur is really actuated by milder sentiments, I shall find her favourably disposed, and the favour which the King so amply affords us, will certainly not irritate her against us.

It was then only necessary to return home to find them, but there I was certain of not meeting my father, and it was towards him my attention was chiefly directed. During this uncertainty of what plan I should adopt, the Marquis de P—— was announced, and instantly entered the room. He had heard at Versailles what had occurred ; he congratulated me with much warmth on having performed so generous an act, “ and to prove to you,” he said, “ my sincere friendship, I have taken “ the utmost care of your lady, and “ shall feel extreme pleasure in conducting you to her fond arms.”

“ To her arms ! ” I exclaimed, astonished ! — “ Yes, and likewise to  
“ your



“ your sister’s, who is with her.” Their first intention was to have returned to—but I succeeded in persuading them, that by remaining in, or near the capital, they would sooner hear of you, and probably learn some trace that might lead to your discovery; but we never suspected you were so near to us, as they are at Charenton, in a small house which I bought for a female friend, who afterwards disliked it—But how, I interrupted him, did they acquire the honour—I conceive your surprise, my dear Boncœur; but let us depart instantly, and not delay the happiness your dear sister, and charming wife will enjoy in embracing you, the worthy object of their most ardent affection!

I got into the Marquis’s carriage with him, and when we were out of Paris, where the noise of the carriages had prevented him from speaking, he gave me the following relation:

“ You are much surprised at hearing, and still more desirous of being informed, how I have been so fortunate as to obtain the opportunity of serving your charming relatives.

“ —I had Mrs.

“ Mrs. de Charmes, who returned  
“ home too late to speak to you on the  
“ day you arrived, arose early in the  
“ morning to see, and desire you not  
“ to oppose those pleasurable plans we  
“ had projected to divert your father  
“ from his melancholy. She was in-  
“ formed you had quitted the house  
“ with a stranger, and the porter giv-  
“ ing her the note you had left, she  
“ suspected from the strange language  
“ in which it was written, that it con-  
“ tained some mystery of great impor-  
“ tance to your father. Wh-ever wo-  
“ men do not understand they instantly  
“ conceive to be Latin, and under this  
“ idea she brought your note to me for  
“ explanation.

“ I had from an early period of my  
“ life learnt the language in which you  
“ wrote. Finding the purport of your  
“ note would considerably alarm your  
“ your father, we resolved to conceal  
“ it from him for some time, and Mrs.  
“ de Charmes, exerting the influence  
“ she had over him, she persuaded him  
“ to set off instantly for Charenton,  
“ where, with pardonable deceit, we  
“ assured him you would join us on  
“ your

“ your return for Versailles, where you  
“ was gone to excuse yourself for not  
“ attending.

“ Your father readily believed our  
“ assertion, and manifested no uneasiness at your absence. Mrs. de  
“ Charmes, however, sent me several  
“ times a-day to your lodgings, to inquire if there was any intelligence of  
“ you, and it was on one of these occasions I met your wife and sister,  
“ who were going to return to ——. I  
“ took them to your father, who received  
“ them with the more satisfaction, as  
“ they came by your invitation; but  
“ this joy was but of short duration,  
“ your wife’s generosity would not permit her to conceal the attempt that  
“ had been made against her liberty.  
“ Your father seemed transfixed with  
“ horror; and Mrs. de Charmes, desirous of avoiding her enemies, and  
“ withdrawing your father from the  
“ persecution, shewed your letter, and  
“ assured him, she believed, you had  
“ consulted your safety by flight.

“ At first your father wished to go  
“ to court and justify himself, indignant  
“ at being pursued like an obscure criminal



“ minal who wished to evade punish-  
“ ment, he wished to be judged in a  
“ way appropriate to his rank and  
“ birth ; but our prayers and sollicita-  
“ tions, the odious treachery of a per-  
“ fidious wife, and perhaps a senti-  
“ ment I will not mention, but it can-  
“ not be unknown to you, determined  
“ him to follow Mrs. de Charmes,  
“ who wished to depart immediately ;  
“ they have happily escaped the unjust  
“ persecutions which pursued them,  
“ and we a few days since received in-  
“ formation they were safe in Holland.  
“ Your father, who entrusted your  
“ wife and sister to my care, desired  
“ them not to leave me, until more  
“ favourable events should unite them  
“ to either you or him. I have ever  
“ since endeavoured to render their situ-  
“ ation as agreeable as possible ; I have  
“ procured them an amiable and plea-  
“ sing companion to divert them when  
“ my presence was necessary at court,  
“ and I hope they will confess them-  
“ selves satisfied with my respectful  
“ assiduities during your absence.”

I had returned the Marquis my  
most sincere acknowledgments for his  
friendly

friendly care and attention, when the carriage stopt at his house; he entered first, and my wife, who was at a window, soon joined us, but her surprise at seeing me so unexpectedly almost deprived her of motion; I flew and clasped her in my arms, but she trembled so violently, that fearful she would faint, I was obliged to release her from my embrace, and place her on a chair.

On recovering, she was almost frantick with joy at seeing me, Hortensia was not less happy; she had perceived us from the bottom of the garden; and quitting a gentleman with whom she was walking, she hastened to express her delight at seeing me. It was Mrs. de Charmes's brother she had left; he, however, followed, and joined his rude gratulations, swearing he was enchanted at my return.

The first effusion of joy being subsided, I observed Hortensia and Henrietta were extremely and gaily dressed, and knowing they were neither of them attached to finery, particularly when in the country, I knew not to what to attribute this coquetry, and my wife, per-

perceiving I observed her, avowed with some confusion, that they had expected the Marquis, with whom they were to have attended a ball in the evening.

“ Having found Mr. de Boncœur,” said the Marquis, politely, “ we cannot wish for any other pleasure than that of being with him for the present, we shall hereafter have opportunity of indulging in other amusements.”

“ Why so ?” exclaimed d’Ombreville, “ I am sure our friend would sooner share our pleasures than prevent them. No, no, he shall dance with Mrs. de Beaujeu, who is here ; you, Marquis, with Mrs. de Boncœur, and I as usual with her dear sister. I wish to God old Boncœur was here with my sister ; may I be dishonoured, and never drink champagne in my life, if I would not make them open the ball with a saraband.”

This impertinent harangue seemed to give my sister pain, but was scarcely attended to by any one else, and notwithstanding I earnestly requested them not to relinquish their intention of going to the  
the



the ball, the Marquis and my Henrietta resolved to stay with me. D'Ombreville, however, went, and the rest of the day passed in mutual caresses, questions, and felicitations.

Each moment increased my esteem for the Marquis, and I almost ceased to consider the event that had procured me so respectable a friend, unfortunate.

Adieu.

~~~~~  
LETTER XV.

The same to the same.

WE expected to hear from my father in a few days, as he had promised to write the moment he had a fixed residence; this intelligence I waited for with the utmost impatience, resolving to follow him wherever he might be.

The lieutenant of the police, and several other distinguished persons, being entitled to my acknowledgments for their various civilities to me, I determined to call on them the following morning.

D'Ombreville on returning from the ball, expressed a wish to present me to
half

half a dozen of his friends with whom he was to sup the following evening, as from the account they had heard of me, they wished for my acquaintance.

I was not much inclined to associate with d'Ombreville or his companions, but willing to know who were the intimates of a man I disliked, I consented to his request.

Having passed the morning in paying the different visits I intended, in the evening I went to the Opera, where d'Ombreville appointed a meeting; he soon appeared with some of his friends, and after some mutual introductory compliments, we retired to the place destined for our supper party.

I soon perceived the favourable impression my conductor had given of me, by the distinguished manner in which I was received; but at length their extreme politeness and respect disgusted me, as some appeared at least my equals and many superior to me in age.

Supper soon banished this restraint, and each forgetting their studied reserve, their natural characters displayed themselves. I then discovered what description of people I was among: the

repast was hardly half over, before they were drunk ; each then recited his most glorious exploits ; one had shot a hackney coachman ; one had beat a creditor who required payment, and afterwards borrowed more ; this had pawned his mistress's diamonds, and another had robbed his father ; the most honest had sold a blind horse to his best friend, borrowed his watch, and sold it. The least guilty of my respectable companions deserved at least to be imprisoned the remainder of their lives. Into what a cavern of banditti had I suffered myself to be introduced !

At length, tired of drinking and talking, they became silent, and insensibly fell asleep ; d'Ombreville, however, started up, stammeringly exclaimed, " What the d—l is all this ! we are as dull as
" if we had our night caps on ready
" for bed : suppose we were, in order
" to rouse ourselves, to sally in quest
" some kind females, it will not be so
" stupid as sitting here."---" With all
" my heart ; not a bad thought," said another, hiccuping—" We had better," drawled a third, " go at once to Mrs.
" ——'s (naming a famous courtesan
" whom I had heard mentioned) and
" in

“ in our way we will upset every one
“ we meet.”

This noble project was universally applauded ; and while they were seeking their hats, I took an opportunity to escape, thanking Heaven for having come off so well. Luckily I met a coach at the first stand, and instantly drove to Charenton, fearing d’Ombreville and his noble companions might come after me to my lodgings.

Expecting to find them all in bed, I knocked gently at the door ; it was, however, instantly opened, and I was astonished to find my wife yet up, engaged in reading a new pamphlet to the Marquis, who told me, that suspecting I should not remain long with d’Ombreville, they had determined to wait for me.

After thanking them for their extreme attention, I expressed my regret at being acquainted with a man of such character and loose manners as Mrs. de Charmes’s brother, and concluded by requesting the Marquis to devise some means of secluding d’Ombreville from his house, or to permit me, my wife,

and sister to go, as I conceived it extremely improper to associate with such a libertine.

The Marquis coincided in the justice of my remarks, but assured me the basis of the gay d'Ombreville's character was candour and benevolence: and it would be an action worthy of our exertions to bring him to a sense of propriety; he supported this project by many just and generous reasons, but very dangerous for us to adopt.

D'Ombreville did not appear the next day at Charenton, and wishing to profit by his absence, to inspire my sister with the just horror she ought to feel at such a debauchee, I, when we were all assembled at dinner, described the scene I had witnessed, with the indignation it had excited, divesting it, however, of the gross expressions, and shading the indecencies that might offend female modesty.

A sigh my sister endeavoured to suppress, attracted our attention towards her: she seemed extremely agitated; her respiration was short and quick, her cheeks alternately pale and red, her
eyes

eyes were bent to the ground, and it was with great difficulty she could suppress her tears. She did not stop eating, fearful of being remarked, but she revolved each bit she took frequently in her mouth, and swallowed with apparent pain. Her situation excited considerable uneasiness in my mind, and I waited with impatience the conclusion of dinner, to be informed of a secret I trembled to hear.

The secrets of the heart form the cement of female friendship; under this idea I supposed Hortensia had deposited her's with my wife. With this view I called Henrietta aside, and telling her my fears, pressed her to inform me of all she knew, that could calm or justify them; she avowed she was equally alarmed, but notwithstanding her utmost endeavours, she had never learnt or observed any thing that absolutely authorized them.

“ Ah!” I exclaimed, “ the dissimulation, prejudice compels your sex
“ to employ, is the cause of almost
“ every misfortune they fall victims to.
“ A young woman endeavours to suppress the flame that pervades her heart,

“ rather than promulge it ; but such
“ exertions only serve to increase her
“ passion, and produce irreparable
“ effects.”

I knew Hortensia's character ; possessing a heart of extreme sensibility, had he been indifferent to her, hatred would soon have followed ; on the contrary, if he had rendered himself agreeable, I was convinced he had won her affection ; but what increased my alarm was, that she being equally incapable of dissimulation or mistrust, had not been able to conceal her attachment from the libertine, whose seducing exterior had vanquished her.

O heaven ! what progress may he not have already made, and what advantages may he not have taken ! I flattered myself a guilty passion had not led this senseless girl astray, though left to herself—left to herself ?—But you, Madam, addressing myself to Henrietta with some warmth, why did you bring her here, to abandon her to the first seducer who might present himself to abuse her youth and inexperience ? Pray Heaven my reproaches may be unjust !

This

This severe reprimand, which only my extreme anxiety could justify, so affected my wife that she burst into tears ; but more important concerns than amusing myself in wiping them away, demanded my attention.

I desired my sister might be informed I wished to see her, and the evident agitation she manifested on appearing, confirmed me in my opinion. Nevertheless I summoned all my fortitude, to support with calmness my conversation with this unfortunate girl, wishing rather to inspire her with confidence than dread.

" Come, my dear Hortensia," I said, " and set near me ; do you not think it very long since we had the pleasure of being together ? let us profit by the present moments in again enjoying that happiness we each formerly delighted in." I then took her hands, kissed them, and led her to a chair that I had placed in a dark part of the room, that I might not perceive her confusion on making the confession I expected from her ingenuousness.

Repeated sighs were for some time the only answers I could obtain.

“What,” said I, with softness, “am
“I to suppose, my dear Hortensia, by
“this grief? Is my presence the cause?
“Or is my affection a weight your heart
“cannot sustain? Come, my love, let
“us mutually share the sentiments of
“our hearts, you well know the affliction
“I have borne for some time, yet
“my first wish and exertion shall ever
“be to alleviate your sorrows.”

Hortensia gradually slid from her chair, and suddenly sunk at my feet; I took her up, and replacing her on her seat, assumed the posture I had made her quit. “Dearest friend and sister,” I said, in a tone of voice, as much altered as her’s, from the pain her sorrow excited, “be assured nothing is so
“dear to me as your happiness, nor
“any thing so afflicting as your infelicity! Say, shall we postpone entering into any explanations?”—“No, no,” she exclaimed, stimulated by a virtuous repentance, “I must speak, I
“must confess all; I am highly culpable, and unworthy of your kindness;
“but rise, and let me resume an attitude appropriate to my degraded
“state.”——“Yes, Hortensia, your
“sister,

“ sister, of whom you are so fond, has
“ yielded her heart to the contemptible
“ object of your indignation.”—“ Ah!
“ if my father had been more prudent,
“ and like you, endeavoured to know
“ him, he would not have suffered—”
“ What do you say, Hortensia, has
“ my father suffered the infamous
“ libertine”—“ He only considered
“ him as a thoughtless young man,
“ whom it would be easy to reclaim;
“ as for myself, I looked upon his
“ gaiety and freedom of discourse, as
“ the offspring of candour, and the
“ emanations of a heart void of guile.
“ But why do I endeavour to excuse
“ myself? But if I was as doubtful as
“ I have confidence in what you say,
“ from what you related at dinner, I
“ have many reasons to suppose it is
“ too true, that the most scandalous
“ libertinism reigns in the heart I
“ thought worthy of mine? The veil
“ is torn, the illusion is destroyed,
“ and the truth, though cruel, is clear.”

It was necessary I should endeavour
to calm and tranquillize the painful
emotions of remorse that seemed to rend
her bosom.

“ Your generous efforts,” I said,
“ announce a firm soul, which leaves
“ me no cause for uneasiness; I de-
“ pend more on you, at this juncture,
“ than on myself; and I see you will
“ be less indulgent to this improper
“ attachment, than perhaps my tender
“ friendship for you could have per-
“ mitted. I leave you to the direction
“ of your own sense, it will guard you
“ better than my vain prudence. I can-
“ not, my dear girl, express to you my
“ joy and admiration at finding you so
“ worthy of my esteem! I thought my
“ Hortensia would never be so mean as
“ to yield her soul to the sensations of
“ base pleasures! honour and virtue
“ can only obtain her heart, and when
“ she chooses a husband, she will not
“ forget it is the name of Boncœur
“ she is going to change.”

Seeing I had extended my observa-
tions as far as was necessary to produce
effect, I pressed her to my bosom, and
with the most endearing epithets, re-
quested her to walk with me in the
garden; before, however, we descend-
ed, I again embraced her, and pressed
my lips to her cheek; and this kiss of
peace

peace was like the seal we affix to solemn promises, the which though tacitly, we had made.

The first object that met our view, was d'Ombreville, who had arrived while I was with my sister; he seemed to have received such reprimands from the Marquis, as his conduct merited. He, however, came up to us with his usual freedom, and enquiring after my health, I merely replied, "I was compelled to leave you in disgust last night."

We walked some few paces together, and I observed he was extremely anxious to be alone with my sister; I gave him an opportunity. This mark of my confidence would only excite my sister to merit it the more, and I felt no uneasiness at the use she might make of it; I had placed a vigilant sentinel near her heart: self-love is the safest guard to female virtue.

Under pretext of writing some letters, I retired to my chamber, the windows of which looking into the garden, I could easily watch their proceedings.

They walked for some time backwards and forwards upon the grass-plat, without speaking, though I thought d'Ombreville wished her to retire to the elm-walk, by his frequent pointing to it; at length, from his gestures, I fancied the conversation to be warm, and the violence of some of his movements would have induced me to go to them, if Hortensia, with a look of ineffable contempt, and a low courtesy, had not quitted him, and joined her sister, who was walking with the Marquis at a little distance from them.

I now thought I might as well appear, and listen to d'Omberville's complaints, if he was hardy enough to address me on the subject. In fact, the moment he perceived me, he came forward with that insulting air, by which badly educated young men think they excite fear, when they cannot command esteem.

"What ails your sister?" said he to me, "who has obliged her to treat me so insolently?"—"Sir," I said, interrupting him, "remember you are
" speaking

“ speaking of a lady respectable by
“ her birth and qualifications, and that
“ she is my sister.”—“ I do not con-
“ tradict any of these assertions. But
“ her conduct towards me has been
“ singularly ridiculous.”—“ My sister
“ is not accountable to any one for her
“ conduct, and when it meets my ap-
“ probation, I know no person here
“ who has a right to condemn it.”—
“ Oh! oh! I understand you, Mr.
“ Philosopher, you have been telling
“ Hortensia what passed at our supper,
“ and that has occasioned us to dis-
“ agree.”—“ My sister, who is called
“ Miss de Boncœur, is, in fact, ac-
“ quainted with your conduct, and you
“ can require no other reason for the
“ reception you have met, and which
“ you ought always to meet.”—“ So
“ let it be, Mr. Professor, but give me
“ leave to inform you, you have acted
“ very badly; there are certain gaieties
“ permitted among men, of which nei-
“ ther their wives or mistresses should
“ be informed.”—“ I cannot suppose
“ Sir, my sister will ever be related to
“ you by either of those titles.”—
“ You can’t suppose? I’ll tell you
“ what,

“ what, you may be certain, that all
“ the brothers upon earth, shall not
“ make me renounce the promises I
“ have received from her, and the
“ hopes her father gave me.”—“ If
“ my father gave you any hopes, they
“ were no doubt in consequence of my
“ sister’s sollicitations, and the good
“ opinion he had of your morals ; my
“ sister’s promises arose from the same
“ supposition, and I flatter myself I
“ shall find it as easy to undeceive one,
“ as I have done the other.”

At this, d’Ombreville elevated his voice, and protested, with many horrid imprecations, he would not give up the heart he had won, and if my sister was prevented from acting as she had promised, the consequences should be fatal to many.—I assured him, whatever means he might employ to obtain her, threats were the least likely of any to succeed. The high tone in which I spoke, attracted the attention of the Marquis and the women, and d’Ombreville, perceiving they were coming towards us, thought proper to depart.

My sister, who felt equally indignant with me, at the insolent language he had

had held to her, had told the Marquis, she should intreat me to place her in some situation where she might be safe from seeing this vulgar and contemptible fellow.

The Marquis assured us the house was our own, and hence forward no one should enter it, that was disagreeable to us. He instantly left us to dismiss d'Ombreville, but soon returned, informing us he had voluntarily left the house, and concluded with promising he should write to inform him, his company would never be acceptable without our permission.

Adieu.

LETTER XVI.

The same to the same.

ON leaving the castle of Vincennes, the governor recommended me a servant whose master had lately died in one of the dungeons of his prison; he had been a captain of grenadiers, and incurred this rigour by insulting a general officer of the first distinction; the serjeant of his company, who was inviolably

violably attached to him, purchased his dismissal, to follow him into his captivity, and obtained permission to attend him, on condition he should not recover his liberty until after his master's death. This was the servant the commandant recommended me, and so much had his conduct interested me in his favour, that I instantly received him, without making any agreement, resolving to treat him rather as a dependent friend, than a servant.

From the moment he entered my service, I observed his prudence equalled his zeal, and I directed him to be perpetually watchful of d'Ombreville and my sister, in case he should again appear at the house, as I had reason to suppose he would, notwithstanding the Marquis's promise, which seemed to be given, more out of complaisance and a desire of gratifying me, fearful of irritating me farther in the first gust of resentment, than from a determined resolution to exclude him.

La France, my worthy servant, promised his utmost attention, and trusting to his vigilance, I felt perfectly easy. My only anxiety was to receive some
4 certain

certain intelligence of my father, whom I was determined to join the first favourable opportunity.

Considering what had passed with d'Ombreville, as an event of no consequence, I retired to bed, and slept comfortably and pleasantly. On rising next morning, at a much later hour than usual, la France informed me, a very ill-looking man, apparently a disguised soldier, wished to speak with me, and had been waiting some time; I desired he might be introduced; on entering he gave me a letter, which I immediately knew to be from d'Ombreville, though it had not his signature.

The injurious and mis-spelt language in which it was written, plainly evinced the author's ignorance; it finished with a challenge, which not meaning to accept, I returned the letter to the person who brought it, telling him I had no answer to give. "Sir," he said, "I know the contents, and you may give a verbal answer, if you are afraid of writing."

"I have never yet known fear, and the person who sent you shall not be the first to excite it; since you are aware

“ aware of his design, you may as well
“ be informed of my determination;
“ tell him, that not considering my
“ life as my own, I have less right
“ over that of another person, and consequently I can never accede to a
“ proposition that infringes the laws
“ of religion, my country, and humanity; tell him also, it will be unsafe
“ for him to offer the least insult to
“ me or any of my family.”

“ What, Sir! refuse to give a gentleman satisfaction?” said the fellow, pulling his hat insolently over his forehead. “ I sha’n’t refuse knocking you down,” said la France, and seizing him by the collar pushed him violently out of the room, and the poor fellow losing his equilibrium, fell down the whole flight of stairs. Humanity compelled me to go to him, but seeing my hero upon his legs, quickly rubbing the dust off his cloaths, I left him, and he went away without saying a syllable.

Though this scene did not last long, the fall of d’Ombreville’s messenger had awakened the Marquis, who immediately came to me, and hearing what had passed, burst into a loud laugh.

From

From some remarks he made, I had reason to suppose d'Ombreville was not a more dangerous foe than his messenger. I had before observed, that however angry he appeared to be, he never displayed that coolness and intrepidity de Rozieres evinced when he met me near *Bonnelles*.

In a few days these conjectures were confirmed; not hearing further from d'Ombreville, we supposed he had relinquished his revengeful projects; I had even been at Paris and Versailles several times, during which we never heard of, or from him in any way.

But while we thought ourselves in perfect security, the most dreadful, horrid, and cruel misfortune was preparing in silence. We were reclining tranquilly on the brink of a precipice tottering under our feet; the total destruction of the world would have been a less melancholy event for me.

Vainly have I endeavoured since the first moment I took up my pen to write these memoirs, to prepare my mind for the delineation of this shocking catastrophe; my hand refuses to trace the terrifying picture my imagination presents.

sents. The horizon of woes extends around me, and offers to my view a sea of trouble, on which I tremble to fix my looks of horror. Terrifick images! leave me for a few minutes, and appear again in turn in the terrible scene I have to depict.

Perfectly satisfied with my sister's virtuous conduct, my wife's sincere excuses, and the kind attentions of the Marquis, which daily increased; I, amidst these three beloved persons, passed my days as pleasantly as my anxiety to hear from my father would admit. The day we expected certain intelligence from him was approaching, and a letter we had received from Mrs. de Rozieres inspired us with some pleasing hopes. When we have long suffered under misfortune, we ardently seize the first shadow of happiness that presents itself, and my days had been so sickened with sorrow, that the smallest ray of comfort was magnified into a brilliant orb of luxury.

We had supped pleasantly, and after conversing gaily on future prospects of peace and tranquillity, we retired to rest. Owing to some alterations that
were

were making, I slept by myself in la France's apartment. I had been some time in a profound sleep, when I felt myself violently pulled by la France, saying, "Sir, Sir, awake, get up, I fear some one will take Mils de Boncœur away."—"Take her away?"—"Yes, Sir, I observed the rascal whom I kicked from your presence the other day, hovering about the house, and I am much mistaken if Mr. d'Ombreville is not with him."—"To rob me of my sister, O! heaven!" and without saying another word, I snatched up a hanger I always kept by me, and ran to oppose the ravishers without stopping to learn where they were.

La France, who could find no other weapon than a large iron crow, seized it, and followed, desiring me to be cautious and silent. The night was extremely dark, and uncertain which way to turn, we listened attentively, and hearing a noise we made towards the place from whence it issued; owing to the obscurity of the night, la France stumbled against a man, and without speaking to him, gave him such a violent

lent blow, that brought him to the ground. The noise increasing, I followed the sound, in which I was guided by the rustling of silk; I caught hold of a woman, whom some one was rudely dragging along; I seized him: "base wretch," I exclaimed, "could you expect to accomplish this villainy so near me?" He continued pulling her, without speaking, I followed, when he, finding he could not escape, struck me so hard a blow in the face as almost deprived me of sight, saying at the same time, in a voice scarcely articulate from anger, "*rash man.*"

Heaven knows my only design was to rescue my sister; but the blow I received deprived me of moderation, and I plunged the fatal instrument I held in my hand into the ravisher's bosom, who instantly sunk to my feet; my sister now free, she pulled the handkerchief away, with which her mouth had been stopt, and imploring my aid, I led her back to the house.

The unfortunate man, whom I had wounded, sighed and moaned so lamentably, that my heart was tortured at the thought of having been the cause.

I wished

I wished to return to his assistance, but Hortensia, clinging round my knees, conjured me not to return to the dreadful scene.

O! treacherous night,
Thou lend'st thy ready veil to ev'ry treason;
And teeming mischiefs thrive beneath thy shade.

La France promising to give every possible assistance to these unfortunate men, I directed my whole attention to my sister, who seemed fainting; I therefore bore her in my arms to my wife's room, where I had scarcely laid her on the bed when she swooned.

Unluckily the Marquis was absent, or he might have assisted us in this melancholy and terrible event; my strength also failed me, and when I attempted to go to la France's aid, I could not even stand, at this juncture he entered, and his looks told me, that neither his succour or mine would be of any use. He told me both the men had breathed their last, but he could not obtain a word from him whom he supposed to be d'Ombreville; but the other, who was the man that brought me the challenge, begged me to forgive him for his attempt,

tempt, as he pardoned me his death, which he confessed he deserved.

“ Oh Heaven ! ” I exclaimed, “ two murders in a strange house, and its master absent. ” — “ Do not be alarmed, ” said la France, “ only enjoin the ladies to secrecy. No one has witnessed this unfortunate occurrence, and I’ll undertake to do away every trace of it. ”

I depended on the vigilant care, and ingenious prudence of this faithful servant, to prevent this melancholy event from being discovered; but my heart was not easy, the plaintive accents of the unfortunate d’Ombreville still vibrated on my ear, I heard his blood bubble from his wound, and I felt his body palpitate under my homicidal hand. What should be the punishment of the infamous assassin who commits premeditated murder? I solemnly protest, feeling as I then did, I would freely have given my life, to restore those I had deprived. Perceiving some spots of blood on my cloaths, I tore them off, as if they were on fire; but I could not calm my terrified imagination; neither

ther did la France's informing me he had thrown the bodies into the river that run at the bottom of the garden, afford me any consolation, though it rendered discovery impossible.

Indeed, their being so conveyed away rather increased than assuaged my affliction. "What," I exclaimed, "deprived even of a grave!" The tender and consolatory language of my wife and sister could not alleviate the acuteness of my regret; but this was but the forerunner of still greater woes.

My mind was so agitated, I resolved not to return to bed again; my wife and sister insisted on remaining with me, and while I was persuading them to retire, we were alarmed by a loud knocking at the door, the women begged it might not be opened; the brave la France was uncertain what to do, when the knocking being repeated with increased violence, "open the door!" I exclaimed, "if I am already pursued as being guilty of homicide, let them enter, let justice take its course." La France opening the door, a man closely muffled up, wished to present a letter to me; I desired he might be introduced,

roduced, and giving me the letter, I instantly recognized Mrs. de Charmes's hand writing. A sigh burst from my bosom: severely have I revenged whatever injuries you have committed against us. "Henrietta," I said to my wife, "read I pray you, for me, "I find I have not even strength sufficient to open it."

Let me not, however, retard the recital of this terrible event—Yet I must, a few moments, my hand trembles violently * * * * *

I have preserved the fatal letter among my most precious papers, I here transcribe it:

Mrs. de CHARMES to Mr. de BONCŒUR,
jun.

"I have long, though unintentionally, occasioned considerable uneasiness in your family, and I now wish to prevent what will greatly augment it; this mark of my repentance will prove its sincerity, and I hope induce your respectable and beloved family to forget the
"many

“ many injuries they have sustained;
 “ and with justice imputed to me.
 “ Your father’s friendship for me
 “ has influenced him to consent to your
 “ sister’s marrying my brother; but I
 “ cannot refrain from saying, such an
 “ amiable and virtuous girl should
 “ never be united to so depraved a li-
 “ bertine. Yet is this odious alliance
 “ nearly concluded; the Marquis has
 “ deceived you, for he has been fre-
 “ quently with your father, who fears
 “ to place himself within reach of your
 “ observation. He is not in Holland,
 “ but near you, and this night between
 “ the hours of twelve and one, he will
 “ take away your sister to give her to
 “ my brother.”

O my God! I have killed my father.
I fainted.

Farewell.

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LETTER XVII.

*The same to the same.*

I MUST again tear open the deep  
 wounds that time has scarcely closed.  
 What heart of sensibility will reward

me for the sufferings of this painful operation. A sigh, a tear from thy friendly soul, will alleviate the poignancy of my pain. Compassion is the only solace the unhappy can receive, refuse it not to my sorrows; thy sympathy will support and encourage me while I pursue the woe-fraught tale.

The terrible news this fatal letter contained, diffused a general horror; eternal misery and despair seemed to be our lot. I had just recovered from the swoon, when the Marquis appeared. Neither of us were able to inform him of the horrid events that had occurred in his absence. La France, after a little time, communicated them to him.

The recital seemed more to surprise than grieve him, until he read the fatal letter; then equally despaired with us, he fixt his tearful eyes on me, then covering his face with his hands, flung himself into a chair, and resting his head upon a table, remained silent for two hours, with the interruption only of our tears and groans.

On a sudden the Marquis sprung from his seat, saying, "my friends, a ray of  
" hope enlightens the gloomy horrors  
" of

“ of our situation; the object of our  
“ regret was not alone in the unfor-  
“ tunate enterprize, one of his fol-  
“ lowers has already fallen a victim;  
“ I have not a doubt but many others,  
“ and d’Ombreville accompanied him;  
“ it was probably that villainous ra-  
“ visher whom divine justice has per-  
“ mitted you to punish.”

The sage la France having stript the  
corsets, before he consigned them to  
their watry grave, a view of their  
cloaths would be sufficient to dispel our  
despair, and change our mourning into  
delightful joy: a happy *presentiment*,  
of which I could not divest myself, in-  
spired me with the most pleasing ex-  
pectations.

With what avidity the unfortunate  
seize the smallest particle of hope!  
Scarcely had the Marquis finished  
speaking, but I felt myself relieved; the  
justness of his suggestion impressed me  
strongly; my eyes glistened with tears of  
pleasure, my heart palpitated violently,  
and my soul hovered o’er my lips to ex-  
hale the ardent wishes I was unable to  
articulate.



This state of perplexity, and anxiety, whether relative to life or death, must be incomprehensible to every one who has not experienced it. Hope flattered round my heart, without entering it, like the weak flame of a lamp that is nearly extinguished for want of support. My sister, who was seated on my wife's bed, flung herself into her arms at the first disclosure of this important advice, and they pressed each other to their bosoms with an emotion expressive of their earnest wishes and fond hopes of success.

Providence again deigned to suspend our fate; but its ultimate decree, whether favourable or otherwise, was ready to be announced definitively. The Marquis and la France were gone to examine those silent and terrible witnesses which at first view would pronounce for or against us: the first cloaths examined were those of the unfortunate creature who had declared himself; but on la France's producing the others, all our hopes were crushed. We recognized them immediately, and and though they annihilated the weak ray

ray that had for a moment dazzled our minds, I darted towards la France, tore them from him, and hung them on a chair: then falling on my knees, I pressed them to my trembling lips, and they were soon as much drenched in my tears, as in the precious blood I had shed.

My profound and silent grief certainly appeared sacred, for not one that was around me attempted to persuade me to quit the heart-rending objects.— I at length arose, and after again pressing them to my lips, I took them from where they hung to carry them to my apartment. La France came forward to take them from me, but I pushed him gently aside, not wishing the sacred relics of him who had been most dear to me in the world, should be profaned by strange hands; and after placing them in my chamber, I returned to join my companions in misfortune with more seeming tranquillity than they expected: but this apparent calm proceeded from the inauspicious resolutions I had formed.

I told them in a manner that seemed to surprise them, “ I accuse no one of

“ the misfortunes with which I am  
“ overwhelmed. It is evident they  
“ were destined to be my fate ; and  
“ you, la France, I blame not your  
“ zeal, though it has been attended  
“ with such melancholy consequences ;  
“ let it be employed to repair the loss  
“ your prudence has occasioned. You  
“ know the object of my affection and  
“ piety ; I expect it to be recovered ;  
“ I will assist you in the painful and  
“ troublesome search ; and if his pre-  
“ cious corse is enveloped in the vast  
“ ocean, it must yield it up to an un-  
“ happy son.”

This sensible and faithful servant re-  
plied, though scarcely able to speak for  
tears, “ Sir, my services are devoted  
“ to you for life ; may I be so fortun-  
“ ate in my exertions, as to afford  
“ you an alleviation to your sorrows.”

My wife, notwithstanding her ex-  
cessive grief, was, no doubt, secretly  
pleased to find mine so moderate ; she  
and the Marquis approved of my resolu-  
tions, and he begged me to accept of his  
exertions in the sorrowful undertaking.

He procured twenty faithful men, in  
whom we could confide, and placed  
them



them in different boats ; in one of these I went with la France, and two of the most expert mariners, who had been employed on similar occasions before. But all our exertions were inefficacious; for fifteen nights and days the deepest parts of the sea were explored, without stopping, but to take such repose and sustenance as was absolutely necessary to support the painful labour.

It now seemed to me as if I was compelled to relinquish happiness a second time: as if it had not already long forsaken me. While the search lasted, the hope of being successful had suspended my grief; but the necessity of renouncing this only and last resource, reduced me to despair. Religion and philosophy were useless, there was nothing to relieve me. The grief with which my heart was swoln, burst forth with fury, whatever object met my eyes excited imprecations and blasphemy; each thought was like a dagger piercing my brain: reflection exacerbated my torment, and envenomed my wounds. His

—“ Poor corse, pale, pale, deform'd with  
“ murder,”

E 5

was

was ever present to my agonized imagination: my brain was on fire, and frantick, I exclaimed—"Reason, piety, and virtue, what influence have ye had over me! the most immaculate soul has become the most criminal! The most submissive and affectionate son has committed parricide! Honour and fraternal love, the most dignified sentiments of human nature, have propelled me to the perpetration of the most heinous offence; after having been my accomplices, they have become my executioners. And hast thou, O God! permitted it? Didst thou place me on earth to be eternally guilty and unhappy? It is only to see me perish slowly that thou hast condemned me to suffer for life. Curses light on me!" I cried, tearing my hair, and striking my bosom, "Curfed be all those that are about me! Curfed be every thing that breathes!"

It was impossible to sustain these violent emotions of despair for any length of time; my strength exhausted, and my breath failing me, I sunk on the floor,

floor, and my heart, shook by such terrible concussions, and racked with grief, felt bursting asunder, to give a vent to a flood of tears that inundated my face. They seemed to alleviate the acuteness of my despair, but the least attempt to console me, by words or actions, only heightened it. By suffering it to take its course, it insensibly subsided; the natural mildness of my character gained the ascendancy; I fell on my knees, and asked pardon of Heaven, and those about me, for the violence of my proceedings. "Will you not," I said, "excuse the involuntary movements of such just despair? Excessive sufferings excite piercing cries."

My wife sometimes wished to take advantage of these intervals of calmness, to console me by the most tender endearments; but far from pleasing, they disgusted me, and I tore myself from her arms with affright. I flew from her, as if I dreaded committing a crime of magnitude; she, however, repeated her attentions with unabated ardour, at every opportunity, and considering me as one who occasioned his



own sickness, and must be cured against his will, she thought to make me adopt the necessary remedies, by the allurements of her affectionate caresses ; but instead of assuaging my extreme sorrow, they tired my patience, and compelled me to separate myself from those who refused to let me weep in peace.

Grief, like pleasure, has its flattering projects : I contemplated with satisfaction a desire I had formed, of passing the rest of my life in solitude. Nothing was more easy than to escape from my wife, my sister, and the Marquis, and pursue such means as would prevent them from discovering the place of my retreat ; but an insuperable charm attached me to the ensanguined scene of my misfortunes ; to see it, nourished my sorrow : each object awakened my grief, and re-traced the image of my woes, the only one from which I never turned my humid eyes.

I proposed to the Marquis, to sell me his house and furniture, as it was ; I did not fear a refusal from this sincere friend, whose attentions and kindness towards me had increased with my unhappiness ; but I had to oppose his generosity.

nerosity. In fact, at the first mention of my design, his offers and solicitations for my accepting it, preceded my demand; but I persisted in the resolution of paying for the possession, as strongly as he urged my accepting it gratuitously.

It was not that I should have blushed to receive a present that was not of any great importance to a person so rich and generous as the Marquis; but I thought paying for it could alone authorize me to use it in the way I designed, and give me the right of excluding from it every person but the faithful la France, whose services were indispensable.

This point, which I did not conceal, gave rise to a long debate; yet I could not obtain my wish, but on condition that I should permit my wife and sister to live in a different part of the house, at a distance from my rooms, with an express promise, they should never come near me; and if they made the least attempt to disturb my solitude, that instant they were to quit the house. The Marquis also begged I would permit him, on the same conditions, to  
visit

visit the ladies, and enquire my welfare.

These preliminaries agreed to, and my wife and sister consenting with tears, I paid the Marquis twenty thousand livres for the house and furniture. The price was certainly beneath the value; but as it was only for my life, which it was probable would soon yield to extreme sorrow, I did not insist on paying more. The next morning I prepared to follow the line of conduct I had designed.

The Marquis hoping to overcome my deep melancholy, by cloying it with lugubrious objects, proposed that the room in which I intended to reside, should be hung in black, and two coffins, one with my father's cloaths, and the other with those of his unfortunate companion, placed at each side of my bed; but I rejected the idea, as a puerile affectation my heart did not require. It contained an inexhaustible source of sorrow, in which it rather sought silently to indulge, than to display it ostentatiously. The only alteration I made, was having the windows closed,



closed, to prevent me from seeing the charming prospect they offered ; it was too pleasing a view for an unhappy wretch condemned to eternal anguish.

Farewell.

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LETTER XVIII..

*The same to the same.*

**B**EFORE I quitted my wife and sister, I dined with them, and passed the day tolerably tranquil; demonstrating by my caresses, that my affliction had not diminished my attachment for them; and that the life of seclusion I was going to lead, was not from a desire of shunning their society, but from the necessity of quitting the world and its pleasures, which I could not longer enjoy after the dreadful loss I had sustained.

I sent for la France, and told him what I expected him to do; it was merely to bring me what necessaries I required, twice a day, and keep my apartments clean. They consisted of three rooms, opening into each other, by which I could avoid seeing him, whenever

whenever he brought me what I required. I fixed on a place where he would find my written orders, either to change my books, or procure whatever else I might wish for; I also gave him the key of the first door, after making him swear he would not encroach on my retreat, under any pretext whatever, not even if fire menaced the destruction of the house. He assured me, with tears in his eyes, my orders should not be transgressed. I then recommended him to my wife's care, if death should put an end to my misery, and forced a purse of gold into his hand, in part of what he should receive if he continued faithful.

Perceiving my wife and sister to weep while I made these regulations, I told them our separation was as painful to me as them; but it might not be forever: that Providence might have some consolation in reserve, which we could not foresee; but without penetrating into its august decrees, they must allow, that dedicating my whole life to mourning was not too much to expiate the crime I had committed, though involuntary. At this expression their tears increased,  
and

and I feeling it impossible to suppress mine, thought it time to separate. I therefore embraced my friend the Marquis, entreated him to continue his kind care to my mournful family, and pressing my sister and wife alternately to my bosom, I kissed them twice in silence, and left the room.

I had made a signal with my hand for them not to follow me; I, however, returned to salute them once more, when they fell on their knees, and extending their hands with a suppliant look, conjured me, with the most heart-rending sobs, not to forget them entirely, and continue my love for them. I did not dare attempt to answer them, lest my sensibility should betray me; I therefore hastened to my retreat, or rather my tomb, where I soon heard my faithful guardian commence his functions, by locking the door.

Strange inequality of the human mind! As soon as I found myself at liberty to indulge in my grief, I felt myself less oppressed; it seemed constraint was a more insupportable weight than my actual pains; for had it been only



only those my heart sustained, they would have sought relief in sighs and tears. I was at times astonished at my own tranquillity, and I concluded that human life being a tissue of opposite events, it was as impossible for the soul to remain continually in the same affection, as the body to preserve the same attitude constantly.

My grief had been violent ; it might have exhausted all the sensibility with which nature had endowed me ; my affliction was too natural to require any foreign stimulus, and I therefore determined not to avoid any thing that might offer me consolation. With this view I engaged in different employments, but they were ineffectual. After endeavouring to diversify them, without the least taste for any, I found my grief had only sunk deeper into my heart, and of which it would never be divested ; and if the source of my tears was dried, that of my regret was inexhaustible.

Reflection afforded me no consolation ; if at intervals I succeeded in banishing my melancholy thoughts, they were presently substituted by others more depressive. Like those funereal spots,

spots, where the wrecks of mortality are only removed, to place more dismal and fresher objects, the most mournful thoughts occupied my mind incessantly, but in a pensive apathy that only differed from annihilation by the heavy grief which unremittingly oppressed my heart.

At night, when a general silence assured me every one was retired to rest, I cautiously descended into the garden, and bathed with my tears the melancholy spot that was a silent witness of my misfortunes. The most tempestuous and rigorous weather did not suspend my visit; a mere view of it occasioned a flow of tears, and nourished my daily grief.

Nothing could withdraw me from my sorrowful retreat; many letters directed by different hands, had been left by la France among the necessary articles he brought me; but I always sent them back. One, from its being very large and unsealed, tempted my curiosity; it proved to me the Marquis's attachment and indefatigable zeal. From the first day of my seclusion he had conceived, notwithstanding the

the profound secrecy observed with respect to the two murders committed in his house; they might come under the cognizance of justice; and to prevent the consequences of such an event, he went to the King, who was then in Flanders, begged a secret audience, and informed him of the terrible misfortunes in which I was plunged.

This excellent monarch wept at the recital; he ordered a pardon for my involuntary crime to be immediately drawn up, and enclosed it in a consolatory letter written by himself, in which he also dispensed with my services for a year, that I might exhale my grief at liberty. I was extremely affected by the attention of this kind master and sovereign; but his subsequent conduct was still more flattering.

Some months after, while he was hunting on the other side the Seine, the Marquis, who was with him, took the liberty of pointing out a small house that was on the opposite border; he said, "Sire, on that mournful spot, there has long pined in secret, one of your most faithful subjects—the unhappy de Boncœur."

"Is



"Is it there!" exclaimed the King, with an emotion expressive of the most lively interest. Then fixing his eyes for some time on my retreat, he took the Marquis aside, and told him, "I cannot resist my inclination to see de Boncœur; perhaps my visit may tend to alleviate his unhappiness: I will go with you and C—," (then the King's prime favourite.) He instantly stepped into a boat, and ordered his attendants to wait his return.

Various were the conjectures of his suite on this secret expedition. When a prince foregoes his pleasures, few think an unhappy being is the cause. The sorrowful de Boncœur, who had never done any thing to merit this kindness, was, however, the distinguished and highly-favoured object.

So far was I from expecting such a visit, that when la France called at the door, "The King wishes to see you," I thought the poor fellow was deranged; but on his repeating it several times with increased vehemence, I opened the door to convince myself of his situation, when I saw the Marquis with la France, who would not speak, fearful

fearful I might suppose some trick ; but he now assured me the King was waiting with the Duke de C—, but did not like to appear, lest it might give me pain ; but if I would suffer him to see me, he would render his visit as short as I might wish. I remained motionless, uncertain whether I understood him right ; but the Marquis protesting solemnly it was true, I wished to fly to him. “ No, no,” said the Marquis, “ he desires you will not quit your apartments ; he will come to you.”

Scarcely had the Marquis finished this sentence, when the King appeared ; the small light the windows, half blocked up, admitted, the confusion in which my books and furniture laid about the room, the negligence of my dress, the paleness of my face, and my eyes deadened with tears, seemed to impress his Majesty deeply. I attempted to kneel, but he prevented me, and seating himself on a chair that was near, he pointed to another opposite to him, for me to take ; I begged to decline it. “ Be seated, I order you,” he said, in a tone that would have inspired

spired the coldest heart with love and confidence, “ let me for some moments forget the state I hold, to contemplate the image of tranquillity that now offers itself to my view. The silence, obscurity, and melancholy of which every thing here partakes, suggests some salutary reflections to my heart. If a virtuous man, whom I sincerely love, groans in sorrow, without my being able to relieve his pains, what avails my power? How many unfortunate souls are writhing with despair, while I am amused with accounts of my people’s felicity? In praising the happiness of my reign, they deprive me of the most precious use I could make of my power, which would be to console the miserable.

“ You, my de Boncœur, have your afflictions, I am not without my troubles; you indulge freely in your’s, mine are here,” (placing his hand on his heart.) “ A prince can only share his pleasures with those that encircle him.” He then placed his hand on his eyes, and on withdrawing it, seemed to wipe away some tears.—

“ But,



“ But,” continued he, “ I have not  
“ come here to increase your sorrow ;  
“ more happy days will yet come,  
“ when we will freely indulge in the  
“ mutual effusions of our hearts : ne-  
“ vertheless, if you can resolve to  
“ quit”——I hung my head.——“ I  
“ see by your silence, you are not yet  
“ disposed to follow me ; I wish not  
“ to violate your grief ; if by the time  
“ I have granted, your woe should be  
“ subdued, I shall be happy to have  
“ you near me.” Then turning round  
to ascertain no one saw him, he took  
my hand, saying, “ Yes, de Boncœur,  
“ I have many things to communicate  
“ to you ; please your King, and love  
“ your friend.” Perceiving he was  
going to embrace me, I dropped on my  
knee, and pressed his hand to my lips.  
“ Suffer me, suffer me to do it,” he  
said, in a tremulous tone that vibrated  
to my heart, “ you are the first subject  
“ I have dared clasp to my bosom.—  
“ Cruel constraint ! that deprives a  
“ father the pleasure of embracing his  
“ children.” Then, as if fearful any  
thing further should escape him, he  
darted

darted from me, ordering me not to follow him.

Heaven has undoubtedly marked kings with an imposing, though attractive character: at the first sight every heart pants to serve them. If this generous and compassionate master had stopped a few minutes longer, I had certainly gone with him; I had forgot my own troubles; I felt only his. "Is it possible," I exclaimed, "so good a man, and puissant prince should suffer from secret sorrow, while nations are prostrate before him, and Europe resounds with his glory! Who can hope to be happy! Grief and misery is the melancholy lot of humanity on earth. Just Providence! great must be your reserved rewards for so much suffering."

The usual solace of the unfortunate is, that none equals theirs: this barbarous maxim is more afflicting than consolatory; but the suffering poor may for a moment forget their pains, when they consider those of the rich and powerful, whom their imaginations depict as swimming in happiness.

The sorrows I had witnessed my friend and King to feel, had absorbed my own ; but my melancholy increased on seeing no situation could ensure felicity in this world. These reflections tended to strengthen the project I had formed of passing my life in solitude, and which I should certainly have followed, had not Providence directed otherwise.

One day, hearing the door of the room in which I generally ate, shut, I concluded la France was gone out, and I went to take whatever he had left ; but judge of my surprise when I saw a child come up to me, and present me with a basket full of flowers ; the most finished delineation of the God of love but faintly represented the interesting loveliness, and bewitching innocence of this charming infant. I soon recognised it to be the fruit my dear Henrietta had given me of her tenderness ; every trait of this beloved woman was depicted in the infantine figure of her son ; he was her portrait in miniature ; even in his voice I heard those accents that had frequently penetrated my heart, and which I had now been long deprived of.



of. I took him in my arms, and my tears soon bedewed his heavenly face.

“ Ah! papa, you are crying,” he said, (thrusting out his coral lips in a way that announced he was also near crying). “ they told me, you would be glad to see me.”—“ Yes, my boy, yes, my dear child, I am really glad to see you, it is only from tenderness and pleasure that I cry.”—“ That’s like me; when they told me I was going to see my papa, I was very happy; I was in hopes to see you pleased; but when I saw you so pale, and so different from the Marquis, I was going to cry. I hope you are not ill, my dear papa; indeed I shall be very sorry.”—“ I have been ill, my sweet boy, but I shall soon be well.”—“ Ah! so much the better; my dear papa, indeed I would sooner be sick than you;” he then threw his little arms about my neck and kissed me repeatedly.

“ Oh! my lovely child, leave me, leave me, the sentiments you recall to my heart are too acute!”—“ What, must I go, papa, you are angry with me; you don’t wish to see me

“ more: will you not take my little  
 “ present?”—Oh! yes, yes, my dearest  
 “ boy, I love you, and ever shall.”—  
 “ Then don’t refuse my present, I  
 “ could never give you any thing be-  
 “ fore, I was too little when you left  
 “ me.”

I rose to take the basket, which I had placed on a chair, but he said, “ No, “ no,” pushing me with his little hand, to make me resume my seat, “ I “ must present you with it, and ex- “ plain its contents to you.” He brought it, and placed it on my knees, and after removing some blossoms of ever-green and marigolds, discovered to me a turtle-dove, with a young one lately hatched in a nest of myrtle leaves interwoven with cypress; he then recited a little fable, explanatory of this ingenious and affecting allegory. He began thus:

“ This turtle-dove, which is mother to  
 “ the young one, was after having hatch-  
 “ ed it, abandoned by her mate, who  
 “ retired to a lonely hollow in a fenna  
 “ tree; since which she has continually  
 “ moaned, and will soon die if he does  
 “ not return.”—“ She shall not die,  
 “ my

“ my sweet fellow, she shall not die.”  
“ —“ And the little dove, you won’t  
“ kill it, papa ?” —“ No, my child,  
“ I will not, I will nourish it in my  
“ bosom ;” at this, his expressions of  
joy were excessive, and I was nearly  
suffocated from my own susceptibility.  
My heart, so long accustomed to  
misery, could not support the sensations  
it now experienced ; it required time to  
familiarize myself to my new situation.

After a rigorous winter, the first rays  
of sun gradually dissolve the hardened  
ice, with which the earth is covered,  
and insensibly moistens it, to make it  
produce those flowers that are to em-  
bellish it ; thus my heart benumbed by  
chilling grief, required warming by the  
soft caresses of an ingenious child, and  
prepared for livelier pleasures by more  
moderate sentiments.

This beloved child so delighted me,  
that I found it impossible to separate  
myself from him ; I took him in my  
arms, pressed him to my bosom, kissed  
him with ardour, and involuntarily  
smiled more than once at his infantine  
graces ; and when I surprised myself  
in indulging these emotions, I was



astonished this interesting infant had the power of suspending my grief.

From a false shame I blushed at this natural sentiment, and unwilling suddenly to relinquish the solitary life I had imposed on myself, nor wishing to be separated from my son, I resolved to detain him with me for some time.

I asked him, "Will you always live with me?"—"Yes, papa."—"What in this melancholy place, only with me, and never go out?"—"With you only."—These words were pronounced in such a low and sorrowful voice, that I instantly felt the injustice of my demand, and the ridiculousness of my project; but I could not surmount the false shame that influenced me.

After refusing the personal solicitations of my King, I yielded to the wishes of a child, he conquered my obstinacy, and led me at his will; his endearing caresses effected more than the remonstrances of a monarch, a sister, a wife, and a friend. O all powerful impulse of nature, how vain is resistance! But, thought I, will it not be said, that, disgusted with my retreat, and tired of weeping

weeping for my father, I eagerly seized—Again, cursed pride! No, thou shalt not triumph o'er paternal duties—But I betray those of a son—Ah! what should prevent me from indulging in my just woes? What frivolous pleasures, what insipid affections can efface the remembrance of my heavy loss, that,  
“ ——— like the tyrannous breathings of the  
“ north,  
“ Shook all our buds from blowing.”

Yet, from having formed the ridiculous project of secluding myself in solitude, they might suppose my sorrow was but weak, since I feared the vain amusements of the world could divert me from it.

During these reflections, my boy was sleeping on my bed, where I had placed him after having tired him with my fondness, and I from time to time gently pressed my lips on his roseate cheeks. I thought I was caressing his mother, and I delighted myself in comparing their similitude; the form of face, beautiful nose, and sweetly smiling mouth were exactly alike; he smiled just at this moment, and I could not withhold stealing a kiss from his

vermilion lips. The ardour of my impression awakened him, his eyes sparkled as I had often seen his mother's on my approach. Though mine had been so long deprived the pleasure of seeing them, my heart easily recalled them. Her elegant form, her graceful step, her expressive movements, her interesting and bewitching softness of manners, were all present to my imagination, and I impressed a thousand fervent kisses on all the beauties it represented.

O God of love! great have been my faults! How often have I refused her tender endearments, without diminishing their ardour! How frequent have I driven her from my arms! Have I not flown from her's! I had the barbarity, calmly to view her heavenly countenance bedewed in tears! Oh! my beloved wife, forgive me! Grief had withered my heart, and rendered it insusceptible of your affection; but I fly to reward your love, and unshaken fidelity! You will joyously exult at the success of your innocent stratagem. For you no doubt devised it, to recall my affection, or dispel my melancholy.

Though



Though the night was far advanced, no one came for the child, imagining, I suppose, that from my detaining him, he had effected the purpose for which he was sent.

But how was I to proceed? From the feelings my tender reflections had excited, could I act otherwise than adopt the conduct most flattering to the sentiments they had inspired? I resolved to go to my beloved wife, the happy object of this favourable change. I took my boy gently in my arms, in order to take him to her, and place myself at her bed-side, without disturbing either of them.

With trembling steps I proceeded towards her chamber, fearful of betraying myself by the least noise. Dearest Henrietta! my heart flies to meet your's; my impatience to see you, lengthens every moment of absence. The cherished pledge of your tenderness I bear in my arms as an excuse for acting as I did not dare do before, will obtain my pardon for every injury I have to reproach myself with; but I doubt not your indulgence, I know the native goodness of your heart, and mine  
F 5 enjoys

enjoys in advance the fond caresses I shall receive.

When I came to the chamber door of the lovely woman had so long estranged myself from, a tremor of joy pervaded my frame, and deprived me of strength to such a degree, that unable to support the child, I placed him on the stairs while I recovered my spirits. I thought I heard some noise in my wife's room; I approached softly; the light was not yet extinct, and I heard them in earnest conversation. Ah! thought I, it is my dear sister, they are pleasing themselves with the success of their stratagem, and unwilling to keep them longer in suspense, I opened the door: O Heaven! O vice! O perfidy!—

Farewell.

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LETTER XIX.

The same to the same.

LET me hasten to describe the scene I witnessed—My wife in the greatest disorder, almost naked, seated on the Marquis's knee, who with eager ardour was kissing her discovered charms!—Traitors!—But let us draw a thick

a thick veil o'er these criminals. When I saw them in this odious situation, all my faculties were benumbed, a violent shriek was the only expression of my sorrow. I flew with terror from these entwined serpents, and hid myself in my own apartments, resolved never to quit them again.

This cruel and unexpected blow totally absorbed the powers of my mind; the violence of my sufferings reduced me to a state of insensibility. I had thrown myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands, in which situation I remained a long time, when I was roused by some one speaking.

From the agitation in which I entered my rooms, I had forgot to shut the doors; it was Hortensia. "O, my dear brother," she cried, "do not refuse your sister's consolation, your dear Hortensia's, your only remaining friend on earth; attempt not to drive me from you, for I will never quit you, while a spark of life animates my frame."

At this affectionate declaration, I raised my head, and saw Hortensia at my bed-side on her knees, with my dear boy, who was also weeping.

My sister's caresses, and my son's innocent tears, pierced my heart, and excited the sensibility it had lost. I pressed them to my bosom in silence, though with far different emotion, to what I had the moment before experienced; but my imagination suddenly recalling the odious scene I had witnessed, I repulsed the child with horror. Take him from me, I screamed, perhaps his mother——The poor child, frightened at my violence, flung himself at my feet, and joining his little hands, implored my forgiveness with such innocence and affection, that I thought my heart would break. I snatched him up and strained him with such transport to my bosom, as nearly to deprive him of breath, which would certainly have been the case, if my sister, seeing my extreme agitation, had not torn him from my arms. “Cruel Henrietta,” I exclaimed, “what delight you have deprived me of,” and I sunk senseless on the bed.

With much difficulty my Hortensia restored me, and on recovering the use of my senses, I would not open my eyes, fearful of having been indebted to those
I never

I never wished to see again for the succour I had received.

Hortensia, who penetrated my thoughts, assured me, that every one around me would sooner forfeit their lives than give me the least offence. The faithful la France supported me in his arms, and some other domesticks, who were unknown to me, surrounded the bed.

After dismissing them all, Hortensia said, with a sigh, " Luckless girl ! My
" indiscreet zeal was the sole cause of
" what has occurred. I could not avoid
" observing the guilty progress of a faith-
" less friend in the affections of a cre-
" dulous, weak woman, who was left
" to herself. Though without suspi-
" cion, from the specious manner in
" which this base fellow concealed his
" criminal views, I was too backward
" with my advice ; seeing it was your
" presence only that could check his
" odious designs, and having no reason to
" hope you would quit your solitude of
" your own accord, I thought the sight
" of your son might revive your tender-
" ness, and remind you of your duties to
" his mother ; but I did not expect my
" stratagem

“ stratagem would produce such sudden effect ; nor such a melancholy *dénouement*.”

“ But how,” I asked, “ has this miserable event become so generally known ?”—“ The servants,” replied my sister, “ are unacquainted with it ; the shriek you gave awakened your son, who was frightened at finding himself alone on the stairs without knowing how he came there, and his cries soon alarmed the house. I not being yet in bed, ran, and took him in my arms, and unable to explain this occurrence, I went into my sister’s chamber, whom I found in extreme agitation. The Marquis, against whom she was highly incensed, made no reply to her reproaches, and to escape my inquiries, he quitted the room and soon afterwards the house ; to which he will not again return, having ordered his lacquey to pack up every thing that belonged to him, and convey them to Paris, convinced he can never regain the heart from which sincere repentance has for ever excluded him.”

Here

Here Hortensia paused in expectation of my answer, hoping to derive from it some means of justification; but observing I continued silent, she, in a low voice, said, " Poor sad-fated Henrietta " is abandoned to the most horrid despair! She has protested with tears, " and in agonies that could leave no " doubt of her sincerity, that she is " not so guilty as appearances indicate."

As I still remained silent, she continued with more warmth, " If you, " like me, had seen the various, the " dangerous plans the villain employed to triumph o'er her guileless heart! professions of attachment, indefatigably zealous to please, affected esteem, feigned wisdom, apparent virtue, and declarations of the most " sincere respect and friendship, all " served to conceal the snare of inevitable seduction: and were you not " deceived by his specious exterior? " did you not feel a friendship for this " vile, insidious——?" " Enough, " enough, Hortensia, I blame not your " zeal, but if you do not wish to renew my pains, if you desire to continue

“ tinue your attentions and kindness to
“ your brother, and are willing he
“ should remain with you, you will
“ never resume this discourse, as it
“ equally wounds my delicacy and
“ sensibility, nor is it consistent with
“ my honour to listen to it.”

I had made the utmost exertions to contain my feelings while my sister was speaking, that the calmness of my appearance, and firmness of my answer, might deter her from ever attempting to justify the fallen Henrietta again. The plan succeeded; my coolness checked her, and I solemnly assured her my determination was fixed.

“ I readily believe,” I resumed,
“ that the woman you would justify
“ is not so much depraved as to think
“ of passing her life in the intercourse
“ of illicit love; if her fault can be
“ concealed, you may depend I shall
“ not divulge it; let her return to her
“ family, she shall not want the necessities, nor even what may render her
“ life agreeable, if the remembrance of
“ her past life will permit her to taste of
“ satisfaction. The reclusive life I have
“ long led, will justify this separation;
“ I will

“ I will write an affectionate and pressing letter to Mrs. de Rozieres, requesting her to superintend the education of my son’s infancy ; while this arrangement is preparing, I shall so regulate my concerns as to ensure you and my sister-in-law, suitable pensions to your rank, and thereby save myself from every embarrassment in the retired life I mean to lead, and which I would not wish you to share ; but you shall experience no privation, that can make you regret your attachment to your brother, who is more jealous of your happiness than his own.”

Hortensia assured me, her first and only wish was to pass the rest of her days with me ; “ I have learnt,” she said, “ by sorrowful example and experience, the little confidence our sex should repose in the major part of your’s ; and the unfortunate termination of two marriages, which seemed to promise felicity, has determined me to abide by my early vow of celibacy.” She promised never to leave me voluntarily, to make me forget, if possible, by her exertions, the sorrows with which
fate

fate had incessantly laden me, and she considered them necessary to a happy futurity.

She then informed me, my generous intentions towards my sister-in-law were unnecessary; that after having sincerely mourned the loss of her husband, to which she acknowledged she had contributed, she renounced the world and retired to a convent, where she had already pronounced her vows.

With respect to Mrs. de Rozieres, she had retired to the country, and her heaviest sorrow was, the fear that I should not forgive the evils her alliance had occasioned in our unhappy family.

Fearful I should not forgive her, I exclaimed! "Ah! I am not unjust, I even
"forgive her two daughters, who have
"been the voluntary causes of the mis-
"fortunes we have experienced. I
"would instantly fly to console this ex-
"emplary mother, or rather mix my
"tears with hers, did I not consider
"her house as the only asylum of the
"unfortunate being, I am going to send
"to her. Let her depart at once with you
"and my son, that she may enjoy the
"caresses

“ caresses of a mother who shall never
“ know her faults.

“ You may inform her of the letter
“ I shall write to Mrs. de Rozieres; it
“ will be affectionate, and agreeable to
“ the intentions I have communicated
“ to you. Assure her nothing shall be
“ neglected to render life easy and
“ tranquil; but the remainder of my
“ days will be painful and miserable,
“ if she persists in attempting to re-
“ gain a heart she has lost by her own
“ fault. Tell her my honour is gua-
“ rantee for the faithful performance
“ of my promises. But, no, do not
“ mention honour, it may seem as a
“ reproach, and that I do not intend.”

I embraced my sister and son with more apparent tranquillity, than my heart acknowledged; and instantly retired to write to the respectable Mrs. de Rozieres; a task I found extremely difficult from the address I was obliged to employ, not to discover or deviate from truth.

When I had finished, I called Hortensia to shew it to her, and asked her if it contained every thing consolatory I could, in fact, say to the amiable woman

woman it was addressed to. Hortensia read it, sighing at each line, and with the interruption of frequent, tender, and sorrowful exclamations. On concluding, she cried, "Is it possible so sensible
" and generous a mind should be the
" most unhappy! Yet so will he ever
" be while he is the most susceptible.
" Dearest brother, she added, precipi-
" tating herself to my knees and embrac-
" ing them with fervour, if you do not
" wish to redouble the pains and sor-
" rows of those about you, do not
" display such tenderness and mag-
" nanimity."

I foresaw to what Hortensia's eulogies would lead; she wished to appease my resentment by interesting my compassion, or by flattering my self-love, necessarily engage my pardon. Unable to accord with her wishes, I affectionately raised her up without noticing her praises. I told her I should set off immediately for Compiègne, as the court was then there, and if the King did not detain me, as I hoped he would not, I should return in a few days, to prepare for their departure, and fix on the mode of life I intended to pursue, as I resolved to
quit

quit a place where I had experienced so much sorrow.

The same day I went to court, but as it was late in the evening when I arrived, I waited till the next day to present myself to the King at his levée. The moment he saw me, he beckoned me to approach. After giving me his hand, which I kissed, he desired me to attend his couchée in the evening, as he wished to converse with me on subjects of importance; and desiring me to withdraw, by a motion of his head, and an affectionate smile, I retired, and with much difficulty escaped from the surrounding courtiers, who considered me as a man in high favour. They were far from knowing the use I should make of it.

Agreeably to his majesty's orders, I attended him in the evening, when dismissing every one who was with him, he conducted me to his private closet, and ordered me to sit down; and placing himself on the other side of a small desk that was between us, he sighed often and deeply, as if he wished to ease his heart, before he communicated its feelings to me.

“ My

“My dear de Boncœur,” he said,
“you see before you, the most miser-
“able prince on earth; eternal sorrow,
“and continual terror, follow his
“every step, and poison every pleasure
“that courts his enjoyment. I fear I
“have occasioned despair and unhap-
“piness to the greater part of my sub-
“jects; I feel too much severity has
“been exercised: and I tremble to
“think my orders may have been
“abused, to treat them with extreme
“rigour. I am convinced many fa-
“milies daily fly from this land of per-
“secution, to seek, under laws more
“definite and less sanguinary, that
“peace and tranquillity their native
“country denies them. I have been
“deceived, and my subjects have been
“the victims of my error. Thou,
“O God, to whom my heart is open,
“knowest whether I ever formed any
“other signs than those of glory, and
“the happiness of those who entrusted
“me with the power I hold. I was
“too easily alarmed by accounts of
“discontents and seditious movements,
“and I much fear I have occasioned
“real evils to avoid imaginary ones.

“It

“ It would be horrid to reflect: and
“ increase my affliction, if I thought
“ personal interest, envy, or hatred, had
“ suggested those persecutions. Those
“ who surround me, have certainly
“ been influenced by blind zeal, and a
“ vain prudence, and involved me in
“ this fatal error.” At this sentence,
he hid his face bathed in tears within
his hands, and it was with difficulty he
could support himself on the desk that
stood before him.

As he seemed extremely distressed, I
took the liberty of attempting to con-
sole him. “ No, no, Boncœur,” he
said, raising his head, “ they have de-
“ ceived me, but you will not; this is
“ not a subject for flattery, you must
“ serve me, and instead of endeavour-
“ ing to palliate my faults, you must
“ assist me to repair them, if there is
“ yet time. To execute my designs,
“ I require a man who with zeal pos-
“ sesses wisdom, and with prudence,
“ sensibility: I think you enjoy these
“ qualifications, and you shall proceed
“ on my plan, as soon as your own
“ concerns will admit; you shall tra-
“ vel through the principal strange
“ coun-

“ countries, and must endeavour to
“ form an intimacy with the most con-
“ siderable emigrants, and those who
“ have the most influence over their
“ unfortunate companions; exert your-
“ self in persuading them to return to
“ their country, give them every as-
“ surance they may wish for the fu-
“ ture safety of their fortunes and li-
“ berty; my ministers have orders to
“ accept and acknowledge every en-
“ gagement you may make. Promise
“ them forgetfulness of the past, and
“ my favour for the future; diffuse my
“ benefactions for the present, give
“ largely, and neglect nothing that
“ may regain their confidence. The
“ riches of a king is the hearts of his
“ subjects! Tell them of my re-
“ pentance, tell them I have been de-
“ ceived, my power abused, which
“ from henceforwards shall only be
“ employed to render them happy:
“ May heaven inspire you with suffi-
“ cient power of eloquence to win their
“ minds, and may your persuasion re-
“ store those, violence has torn from
“ me. Here,” continued this exem-
“ plary monarch, opening a little casket;

“ are

“ are four hundred thousand crowns to
“ begin this great enterprize; the
“ smallest part is in gold, the rest in
“ bills on the most reputable bankers in
“ England and Holland. When this
“ sum is expended, I will remit you
“ more, and may the success of your
“ mission keep pace with the ardour of
“ my wishes for it. I mention not
“ remuneration: a generous soul finds
“ it in the good it performs; and if
“ my friendship is of any value, you
“ possess it in a higher degree than any
“ individual existing. Adieu, we must
“ separate, and let mystery accom-
“ pany your proceedings. Again,
“ farewell, let us embrace while we
“ are alone, and when you leave me, re-
“ member I have entrusted my repose
“ and happiness with you.”

Full of admiration at the excellent qualities of this magnanimous prince, I retired. The commission he had entrusted was exactly conformable to my inclination, and my disposition to seek from change of place, some relief to my sorrows; but had it been contrary to my intentions, I should have undertaken it with alacrity, as I would wil-

lingly have sacrificed my life to obey the orders of my generous master.

I returned to Paris, where I passed some days in preparing for so long a voyage, and from thence to Charenton, to arrange what was necessary for my sister and her companion's journey to Mrs. de Rozières's.

Hortensia was extremely sorry to hear I was obliged to leave her. Notwithstanding her confidence in me, she thought this voyage was a cover to some mysterious design; but assuring her on my honour, an oath she knew I considered as very solemn, that it was in compliance with the King's order, and for the interest of the state, she was easy.

At this moment we received a letter from Mrs. de Rozières, declaring her esteem and respect for me were unabated, and in the most supplicating manner, requesting my pardon for the misfortunes in which she had unintentionally involved our family.

(May she ever, I said to my sister, be ignorant of those we have so much reason to conceal from her; she would die with grief. Unfortunate parent! all

all thy maternal cares have been un-
availing.) She adds, it will afford her
great consolation to see my sister and
her daughter; and hopes their caresses
will relieve the uneasiness her eldest
daughter has, and still occasions her.

This haughty woman, who revolted
at the least authority, could not con-
form to the obedience her new mode
of life imposed; and writhing under
religious discipline, suffered severely
for the misfortunes she made others
feel when she was free.

My mind portrayed the punishment
it must be to a proud woman, to be
compelled blindly to obey, without
power to remonstrate, the absolute or-
ders of a superior, who no doubt ince-
santly endeavoured to humble her.
Rigorous, but just return, for the
heavy misfortunes her stubborn pride
had brought upon us.

Mrs. de Rozières finished her letter
with the most solemn promises of be-
stowing the utmost attention on my
boy; that all her affection was concen-
tered on that branch of our unfortunate
family, she considered him as the solace
of her declining years, but she should

not descend into the grave in peace, unless she could once more enjoy the satisfaction of clasping me to her bosom.

Every thing was arranged for our departure: my sister's was fixed for the next morning, and mine for the following day; but my heart had yet another painful trial to sustain.

Henrietta having been particularly careful to avoid seeing me, I could without fear of meeting her go to any part of the house; and conscious of her solicitude to shun me, I went to examine their carriage.

I had entreated Hortensia to save me from the pangs of bidding a formal adieu to her and my son, as it would only increase the sorrow I felt, at being compelled to part from them. I therefore retired to my solitary apartments, to wait to be informed of their departure; but what was my surprize to find them there!

Henrietta was on her knees, her hands clasped, and her head reclining on her bosom; her son was at her side in a similar posture, and on my approach they both prostrated themselves; Hortensia, who had concealed herself behind

behind the door, suddenly closed it the moment I entered, and throwing her arms about my neck, completely prevented me from flying. I could only turn my head away in order to avoid seeing, what perhaps might have made me break the just resolutions I had solemnly vowed to observe.

I had been some minutes in this painful situation, when Hortensia quitted me to assist her sister-in-law, who, unable to support her shame and grief, had fallen senseless to the floor. She took her in her arms, and I also assisted to place her on the bed; she hastily took off her stays and collar, which discovered her lovely bosom, and this I believe was done with more design than to assist her respiration. The child's piercing cries penetrated my heart, and my fortitude had nearly abandoned me, when casting my eyes on the unhappy victim of seduction, undressed, and the attitude in which her sister held her, by supporting her head on her bosom, reminded me of the fatal moment, when I surprised her in a similar situation in the arms of perfidy. This terrible image, tore open the wounds of my heart,

G 3

heart, I gave a shriek of horror, darted into another room, and locked myself in.

My bosom was bursting with despair, and the sensations of my misfortunes were trebly acute; I was, however, applauding myself for not having betrayed my honour to a faithless woman, when Hortensia, after having recovered her sister-in-law, came to request admittance. I refused her with firmness.

"Leave me," I said, "and do not abuse a brother's patience, whose weakness has authorized your temerity; others, in my situation, would long since have proceeded in such a way as to have avoided the persecution I suffer; begone, I conjure you, begone."

"No," she cried, "I will not go, I will not leave you in anger against me."—"Hortensia, I am not angry—begone—you will drive me to despair."—"Dearest brother, I ask your pardon, on my knees I beg it, (and I heard her assume the posture) but I shall die with grief, I will perish at this door, if you do not open it."—"What is it you require of me, obsti-

“obstinate girl?”—“I wish you—I wish you, to forgive me, and once more to have the pleasure of embracing you; this is all I ask.”—“Are you alone?”—“Yes.”—“I hope you don’t deceive me, Hortensia.”—“No, no, I swear there is not.”—I half opened the door, and seeing she was alone, I suffered her to come in, when I felt myself so exhausted, that I sunk on the chair next to me.

Hortensia on entering, instantly fastened the door, and then flung herself on her knees before me. I held out my hand to raise her up, but she seized and kissed it with such transport as at once restored and softened me. “Ah!” she said, “hatred is a stranger to your heart, mildness and benevolence constitute its essence.”—“Do not therefore abuse it, and depend on my eternal affection—Let us seal this declaration by an interchange of kisses warm from the heart.”—“With all my soul;” and we embraced each other with fervour. Then, fixing her eyes on mine, as if she doubted the sincerity of my caresses, and unable to suppress

the anxiety that agitated her mind, she said, "I fear you deceive us, we shall never see you again."—"My dear Hortensia, I feel for your fears, but you should not yield to them; I have told you as much as I dared, relative to my voyage, and you should confide in what I say; you know I never asserted a falsehood in my life; but since you require an oath, I swear by the sacred memory of those who gave us birth, that a year shall not pass before I see you again, even should my commission not be fully completed, for I can remit the duties of it for some days, and those shall be destined to you."—"Then I go contentedly; I have yet, however, one more favour to ask, (seeing I hesitated) you can grant it without quitting this chamber."—"If so, I promise to agree."—"Suffer me then to assure my companion you do not hate her."

"Ah! my dear sister, what you have seen, must convince you my heart cannot harbour the horrid sentiment; assure her I only feel extreme sorrow—O heaven, at what a period

"riod

“riod did she raise an eternal barrier
 “between us--Eternal! terrifick word!
 “go, go, Hortensia, you unman me,
 “you lacerate my soul.” We embraced in silence, and she left me.

A few minutes after the rattling of a carriage announced their departure; at this moment my heart, shook by my sister's tenderness, felt a shock, that burst all its wounds, and seemed to break the last tie that attached it to the world. My screams would have prevented them from going, had not the noise of the carriage deterred them from hearing me; I hastily traversed my chamber,

—“felt a fever of the mad, and play'd
 “Some tricks of desperation.”—

Unable to support the conflict of contending emotions that tormented me, I called la France, and told him instantly to follow the carriage on horse; “Tell my---tell, tell my sister, I shall
 “join her as soon as possible---that I
 “recommend her to be careful---to be
 “careful of---of---of my son---that I
 “hate no one---that my heart pants---
 “that I shall ever love her---that I am
 “going---that I am gone-----Go, go,

"be quick, say to her every thing affectionate and tender for me."

I found tender complaints, and soft language, weaken the soul, instead of rousing its courage; my sister's tears had so enfeebled my heart, that in a little time she would have managed me at will.

Farewell.

LETTER XX.

The same to the same.

O LOVELY woman, born to seduce mankind! the author of nature has entrusted you with the modelling of our hearts, happy when you only impress us with the virtues! Now do I find my unfortunate father was excusable! A charming woman won his heart, by apparently possessing those qualities that render her sex the objects of our esteem and respect; but my heart, less pardonable, regrets the loss of a guilty and perfidious woman. What does its mean sighs denote? Would it participate in the ignominy of a woman covered with infamy, to imbue itself in criminality, and

and render us both the opprobrium of society?

These severe reflections restored my fortitude, and I determined not to listen to the answers la France might bring. Eternally inconstancy of the human heart! continually agitated by opposite passions, floating in the rapid current of successive desires, like the wave that chases the one that has preceded it, and disappears in turn under the wave that follows.

My heart had not recovered its tranquillity, when I embarked for England, where I was to commence the negociation entrusted to me. The importance of my commission required as much prudence as zeal, and I had reason to applaud myself for proceeding with moderation.

In London, and the other cities and towns in England, I found the emigrants irritated against France by those who had received and supported them, and animated by promises of support, they only thought of revenge, and threatened (puerile idea) to carry fire and sword into the bosom of their country.

I had nearly been torn to pieces, for having attempted to soften the resentment of some of these misguided men, by representing to them the guilt that was attached to their matricidious design of ravaging the country that gave them birth. A barbarous mother, they replied, who only gives her children life, to tear it from them by the most cruel punishments, can expect no lenity; how would you treat her if you were judge? Declare---If there remained a shadow of equity in your heart, you would not condemn our resentment.

Finding, with the most sincere sorrow, there were no hopes of success with these fugitives, I went to Holland, where, though I found less animosity, I did not meet better success.

From the first day of my arrival, I had formed an acquaintance with a most worthy merchant; his candour, and respectable principles inspired me with a strong attachment for him, and he also seemed much pleased with my society. This estimable refugee had sacrificed part of his riches to his love for peace, and abandoning a considerable

able share of his property that he could not convey away, he had established himself at Rotterdam with what he had saved.

His efforts had been so successful, that he did not miss what he had left in France. His family brought up, under his immediate care, all industrious, active and virtuous, personified the interesting descriptions the poets have given us of the golden age. His house was the temple of wisdom, and the asylum of probity; he had acquired the esteem of the whole neighbourhood, and the friendship of this venerable man was generally solicited.

I thought him a proper object to communicate my designs to; I never heard him utter the least complaint against the government of his country, or murmur at the fate he had there experienced.

Could I have persuaded this excellent citizen to return to his country, his example would have considerable weight with many others, on whom his wisdom and intelligence had given him great influence, independent of fifty persons, whom he employed, whom
his

his bounty relieved, or had attached themselves to him by inclination or interest.

My persuasions, however, failed, and my pecuniary offers, though large, were without effect. He wished his country well, but could not again risk his property in a country from whence he had been driven merely for opinion. I asked him if he did not conceive there might be some who having no interest to confine them to any place, might not be willing to return to France, on enjoying greater advantages than they had lost, and more than they would leave?

“There may be many whom such offers might influence, but I think every country better without them, and I am sorry to say, the number of this description is too great: they would sell themselves to the best bidder.”

The little probability there was of terminating my commission successfully, added considerably to my private sorrows. I had received several letters from my sister all equally affectionate and tender. Mrs. de Rozières some-
times

times added a few lines in the same style, and my son, who surpassed their hopes, wrote three lines of his own dictation, though only four years of age; the hopes they gave of the excellence of his genius and sensibility, ravished my heart with delight. No one however mentioned his mother.

One day, on my return from the French coffee-house, (where I frequently went, as I always met a number of my countrymen, from whom I acquired much information to assist me in the negociation I was entrusted with) thoroughly discontented with the little success I had, I was informed the instant I entered my house, that a stranger had been waiting for me many hours. I immediately thought it might be some unfortunate being, who having some faith in my promises, had come to assure me of his disposition to return to France. Under this idea I went up to him, but he seized my hand, and saluted me by the name of brother. I soon discovered it was Mr. de Rôzieres, and just as I was preparing to return his salute, he retreated from me, with

with as much confusion, as he had before evinced ardour at my approach.

“ Ah ! de Boncœur,” he said, “ after
“ the misfortunes and shame my guilty
“ sisters have brought on your family,
“ should I presume to present myself
“ before you ! and the title of brother
“ I saluted you by with so much
“ friendship, is it not a reproach, and
“ perhaps the signal for a declaration
“ of war against him you might con-
“ sider as your enemy ?”

“ My dear de Rozieres,” I replied,
giving him my hand, as a token of
peace, “ I flatter myself I have never
“ given you occasion to suspect me of
“ injustice ; my misfortunes have not
“ changed my character, they have
“ only rendered me more susceptible of
“ the compassion of those who may
“ feel interested in them.”

“ Generous friend !” he exclaimed,
“ I am not yet unworthy of being
“ called your brother ! if I possess not
“ the power of repairing the evils my
“ family have inflicted on you, I have
“ at least revenged the ignominy ; and
“ you will find, by the sacrifice I have
“ made,

“ made, that your honour is as dear to
“ me as my own.”

This discourse made me shudder with horror ; I knew to what extremes his violence would carry him when he considered his honour offended ; I begged him to proceed, as he had greatly alarmed me.

“ You know,” he said, “ the fond
“ attachment I always felt for the cri-
“ minal Henrietta,”---Criminal Hen-
“ rietta !” I exclaimed, with increased
agitation :---“ Yes, yes, I am inform-
“ ed of all ; and you will find, by
“ what I have done, that my honour
“ is the most precious thing to me on
“ earth.” I could not speak ; my
heart was frozen with fear and terror.
He continued---

“ I was with my mother, endea-
“ vouring to console her under the suc-
“ cessive misfortunes we had experi-
“ enced, when your sister and mine
“ arrived. Accustomed to understand
“ Henrietta’s looks, I soon discovered
“ your seclusion was not the sole cause
“ of her profound melancholy ; when-
“ ever your name was pronounced, she
“ was extremely agitated : I judged her
“ heart

“ heart contained some important se-
“ cret, to occasion such violent for-
“ row. I spared neither tears or in-
“ treaties to learn the cause, as it was
“ possible I might remove it. I, how-
“ ever, did not think a knowledge of
“ it would poison the rest of my days,
“ without rendering her any advan-
“ tage.

“ On hearing the fatal secret, I
“ searched for, and found the villain
“ who dishonoured us, and I have
“ washed away your shame in his
“ blood. Now, my brother, you
“ find there is one who values your
“ honour. I have satisfied---I have
“ repaired”---

“ Deluded youth!” I exclaimed,
with a sigh that bespoke more grief
than joy, at finding myself, as he sup-
posed, revenged---“ What have you
“ satisfied? What have you repaired?
“ Do you really feel a sincere satisfac-
“ tion at having deprived a man of
“ life, and blasted the hopes of an il-
“ lustrious family, who will never
“ pardon you for the loss you have oc-
“ casioned them to experience? The
“ victim of your misguided passion
“ certainly

“ certainly diffused misery and despair
“ through our family ; but to what a
“ state will society be reduced, by thus
“ perpetuating injury and revenge ?---
“ Is there a person in existence who
“ has not suffered various offences,
“ either personally or relatively ? If
“ all who had attacked him were to be
“ sacrificed to his resentment, their re-
“ lations and friends, compelled upon
“ the same principle, to adopt similar
“ violence, the world would become
“ a theatre of war and continual com-
“ bats, and ultimately inhabited by
“ cowardly beings, whose existence
“ would be a reproach, if honour, in
“ fact, consisted in shedding the blood
“ of the first thoughtless being who
“ might offend us. Be assured I would
“ not have had recourse to another
“ hand, if I had thought such ven-
“ geance necessary or legitimate.
“ Surely your reasoning is strange !
“ to repair one crime, you commit a
“ greater ! Tell me, since you have so
“ proceeded, is your sister less culpa-
“ ble, or am I less unhappy ? Has it
“ rendered our re-union-----Gracious
“ Heaven ! can you for a moment
“ suppose I wish you to participate in
“ the

“ the ignominy with which she is en-
“ veloped? What change, then, has
“ your rash proceedings produced in
“ our melancholy situation, but having
“ rendered you guilty of murder, to
“ have your life proscribed by the laws
“ of your country, your fortune, the
“ reward of your services and those of
“ your ancestors, for ever lost; de-
“ prived your mother of her only re-
“ maining solace, divulged your sister’s
“ dishonour, and perhaps reduced her
“ to the agonies of despair!

“ And do not you,” I added, placing
my hand on his heart, “ feel some un-
“ pleasing sensations there?”—“ Ah!”
he replied, “ the force of your obser-
“ vations have such a powerful effect
“ on me, that I cannot conceal from
“ you what I really feel. Yes, my
“ friend, the thought of having mur-
“ dered the Marquis continually haunts
“ my imagination: I have not passed
“ a moment’s ease since the fatal con-
“ flict. I frequently strike my hand
“ violently against the bed, in endea-
“ vouring, as I think, to draw my sword
“ from the wound I inflict; I recal his
“ last words; but they afford me no
“ consolation. Expiring, he said—

“ I de-

“ I deserve the death I meet, and
“ my guilt is the greater, as love had
“ but little share in my detestable pro-
“ jects ; I only felt the pleasure of
“ triumphing over a virtuous woman ;
“ a satisfaction I never enjoyed, for
“ at the moment I was to have reaped
“ the fruits of my execrable designs—
“ when the feeble Henrietta’s opposi-
“ tion was but weak---I know not
“ what demon or god, jealous of my
“ happiness, brought her husband, like
“ a frightful spectre from the grave, to
“ dash the cup of blifs from my lips ;
“ but what makes me appear more
“ despicable to myself, is, the diffi-
“ culty I practised with the unhap-
“ py de Boncœur.” Here convulsions
seized him, and he expired, extending
his hands towards me, as if intreating
my pardon.

“ Think not, however,” said de
Rozieres, “ that I consider this testi-
“ mony as justificatory of my sister’s
“ guilt ; she had consented to the
“ crime, and your sudden appearance
“ only prevented the commission of it :
“ she is unworthy of the title of your
“ wife, or my sister.”

“ She,”

“ She,” I replied, “ is certainly
“ guilty ; but am I totally exempt
“ from the imputation ? Did I not
“ repel her careſſes, and ſhun her ſo-
“ ciety ? Was I not wrong in truſting
“ her inexperience to a young man,
“ whom I had only known two days,
“ whom I had found in the ſociety of
“ libertines, and indulging in miſera-
“ ble debauchery ? Should I not have
“ conſidered that the progreſs of vice
“ is more rapid than of virtue, when
“ it receives the impuſe of counſel
“ and example ? Let us endeavour
“ not to be unjuſt ; the deep ſenſe of
“ my miſfortunes has not prevented
“ me from feeling my own impropri-
“ ties ; it was me who conducted and
“ left her in the ſlippery path, where
“ her fall was inevitable. It is her
“ fate I weep, and not the rigour of
“ my own, as I have incurred it by
“ extreme weakneſs and falſe pru-
“ dence.”

While we were engaged in theſe
melancholy reflections, de Rozières re-
ceived a letter from his mother, which
by no means contributed to diſſipate
them ; this affectionate and unfortunate
parent

parent mentioned to her son the sad consequences of his duel; the Marquis's family were pursuing the murderer with the greatest animosity, solemnly swearing to revenge his death.

With respect to Henrietta, on hearing her shame had become publick, she was almost frantick with despair; her mother's indulgent kindness, and my sister's tender consolation, had, however, in some degree, subdued her excessive sorrow; but she was determined to seclude herself for life in the same convent her sister had chosen.

Mrs. de Rozieres concluded her letter with intreating her son not to return to Paris, until his affairs assumed a more favourable aspect; and in case he should meet me, to assure me of her sincere attachment, if I could hear the name of a woman who had been the source of my misfortunes.

We jointly wrote an answer to this letter, in the most affectionate terms; and a few days after we received another, which considerably increased our unhappiness, as the news it announced, she said, would terminate her woes. It was particularly addressed to me, and

and to give you some idea of our feelings, I shall here transcribe it literally ;

“ Sir,

“ The unfortunate woman whose
“ crime has deprived her of the title of
“ your wife ; but whose repentance
“ still induces me to call her daughter,
“ had resolved to conceal within her
“ bosom, and silently expiate her criminal offence against your honour ;
“ but the mistaken mode my son
“ adopted to repair her shame, having
“ given it publicity, the unhappy victim of seduction instantly determined
“ to seclude herself for the rest of her
“ life.

“ Though this was the only conduct
“ she could pursue, she has, in seeking an asylum in her sister's arms,
“ met with unremitted punishment.
“ This virtuous, but too austere woman, who neither knows the weaknesses of humanity, nor the commiseration they are entitled to, has become the furious tormenter of her
“ sister ; to the most humiliating reproaches, she adds the terrors of religion ; and leaving her no hopes of
“ mercy on her part, nor of divine
“ justice,

“ justice, she has maddened her poor
“ sister's intellects. She fancies her-
“ self constantly pursued by her se-
“ ducer; she then runs into the arms
“ of the first person near her, and
“ mistaking them for your's, shrieks
“ with horror, and runs away affright-
“ ed: in these paroxysms no one can
“ manage her, and confounding all the
“ melancholy occurrences we have ex-
“ perience, she screams that your fa-
“ ther, armed with serpents, is fol-
“ lowing her. In consequence of her
“ situation, I took her home, but yes-
“ terday she escaped our vigilance,
“ and several hours elapsed before we
“ could find her. Imagine our alarm!
“ At length we discovered her in the
“ garden, almost naked, her face
“ bloody, from having torn it with
“ her nails, and her body bruised and
“ lacerated by a heavy iron chain she
“ had wound round her.

“ On our approach she prostrated
“ herself, begging us not to commit
“ her to the flames of Hell, but leave
“ her some time for repentance;---
“ then striking her breast, said, she
“ would, in that attitude, implore her
Vol. II. H “ pardon

“ pardon of you, as the Almighty had
“ remitted it into your hands. She
“ then started up, and plunged into a
“ thick hedge of briar, from which
“ we could not extricate her against
“ her will, without almost separating
“ her flesh from her bones ; we were
“ consulting how to proceed, when
“ fortunately your sister appeared : she
“ is the only person in whom my poor
“ Henrietta has any confidence, from
“ the ineffable sweetness with which
“ she always speaks to her.

“ Hortensia, with her accustomed
“ gentleness, approved her design, and
“ asked her where she hoped to meet
“ you : this question seemed to rouse
“ her ; she said, she knew not what
“ road to take, and suddenly appearing
“ to relinquish her design, disen-
“ tangled herself from her situation,
“ and flinging herself into my arms,
“ exclaimed, she knew there was no
“ mercy for her.

“ After she was placed on the bed :
“ whether from the cold to which she
“ had been exposed, or in consequence
“ of the blood she had lost, she was
“ considerably calmer ; a death-like
“ paleness

“ paleness succeeded the deep red with
“ which her cheeks had been suffused,
“ her eyes indicated extreme languor,
“ and her tears flowed profusely; yet
“ even in this tranquil interval, she
“ still asserted it was impossible to live
“ without being certain of your pardon.
“ She often fell on her knees, and
“ implored your forgiveness in the most
“ pathetick and affecting language. Ah!
“ my dear son, if you could hear them,
“ they would pierce your heart; our’s
“ they have torn. Vainly have we
“ endeavoured to appease her, by reading
“ your letters to her, in which
“ every line manifests your extreme
“ sensibility; on these occasions she
“ weeps abundantly, then suddenly
“ starts, and says we deceive her; my
“ assurances to the contrary are useless,
“ your amiable sister’s have not more
“ effect, an exacerbation of her malady
“ succeeds, and for some hours she
“ is in a high state of frenzy.

“ We once ventured to say, you was
“ come, purposely to pardon her. She
“ became quiet immediately, and desired
“ to be left alone for a little time;
“ we pretended to grant her request,

“ and watched her closely ; she began
“ several letters, and tore them, when
“ perceiving us in the room, she stared
“ wildly at us, and smiling contempt-
“ tuously, turned from us without ut-
“ tering a syllable.

“ From this period, the mention of
“ your name produces no effect. We
“ also employed another, which I shall
“ not inform you of ; but nothing
“ could rouse her from the melancholy
“ torpor in which she was plunged :
“ for a long time she refused the great-
“ er part of the food offered to her,
“ and it was only by stratagems and in-
“ credible efforts, we could make her
“ take a tenth part of what was neces-
“ sary to her subsistence. She is
“ frightfully emaciated, her eyes are
“ sunk into their orbits, and are in
“ continual motion : she is the image
“ of silent grief, and black despair.

“ To this melancholy picture of our
“ misfortunes, I dare not add any
“ thing more ; I am conscious your
“ heart should be for ever closed
“ against us ; that we merit your in-
“ difference, and even your hatred
“ would not be unjust ; but forgetting
“ whom

“ whom we are, and what we have
 “ been, if humanity-----

“ It would be useless to say more,
 “ if you refuse to understand a sorrow-
 “ ful mother, and one whom you for-
 “ merly honoured with that title, who
 “ always sincerely felt the tender senti-
 “ ments of a parent for you, and now
 “ on her knees finishes this letter, that
 “ is to decide her fate, and that of her
 “ daughter, who, though incontro-
 “ vertibly guilty, is a thousand times
 “ more unfortunate.”

De Rozieres, who, when this letter came, seeing it was his mother's writing, seized it, and read it to me with many sighs, and frequent tears. I begged him to give it to me; as mournful scenes were not strangers to my bosom, my eyes had long been accustomed to view them. I read this woe-exciting letter, I drenched it with my tears; and at the bottom were these lines from my sister:

“ Your respectable and grief-worn
 “ mother intreats me to add my solici-
 “ tations to her's; I confidently as-
 “ sured her they were superfluous; I
 “ knew your native kindness would
 H 3 “ induce

“ induce you to fulfil our hopes ; it is
“ merely, therefore, to comply with
“ Mrs. de Rozieres’s wishes, that I
“ have written thus much, knowing I
“ shall soon have the happiness of
“ pressing you to my heart.

Dearest Hortensia ! I exclaimed, you have done me justice. I fly to offer consolation, and alleviate those pains, the bare delineation of which have agonized my soul.

This sudden and unexpected resolution excited an extasy of astonishment in de Rozieres. “ Will you, my dearest friend, indulge them ? ” he cried. “ Do you doubt it ? Can you think I would suffer an unfortunate woman to die in despair, when a word from me can relieve her ? ”

“ Ah ! my friend,” he said, penetrated with gratitude, and pressing my hand, “ Is it thus you revenge yourself ? to render a family happy, who have been the cause of your manifold misfortunes ! Dearest de Boncœur ! you will yet be happy. Your virtue and generosity must meet their due reward, or Omnipotence is unjust.” “ Respect

“ Respect its decrees, de Rozieres,
“ our complaints and our prayers
“ should ever be addressed to divine
“ Power, with humble resignation.—
“ And my entreaties to the exemplary
“ monarch who honours me with his
“ friendship, I trust will soon restore
“ you to your family.”

I instantly gave directions to la France, to prepare for my immediate departure; and after repeating my promises to de Rozieres, that I would not neglect any thing that would restore him to his former situation, I set off.

Farewell.

LETTER XXI.

The same to the same.

IN three days I reached Mrs. de Rozieres. My appearance greatly astonished my afflicted mother-in-law and my dear sister; they received me with unbounded and affectionate caresses.— But wishing them to suspend these endearing testimonies of their gratitude, that I might attend on her on whom they supposed my attentions would have

the most happy effects, I entreated them to shew me to her without delay.

“ Ah !” they exclaimed, “ the unfortunate woman for whom you
“ condescend to interest yourself, is
“ really an object worthy of your compassion ; but we doubt whether she
“ can, just now, receive the benefit of
“ it, as it is not an hour since her recovery from one of the most furious
“ paroxysms we have ever yet beheld
“ her in : she swore we had introduced
“ the Marquis into her apartment.—
“ When her transports were somewhat
“ subsided, we wished to put her to
“ bed ; but this she opposed with the
“ most piercing shrieks, saying, her seducer was hidden under it.

“ I am certain,” added my sister,
“ if any thing can restore my unfortunate sister, it will be the kindness
“ with which you are disposed to treat
“ her ; but even this remedy must not
“ be employed without address : from
“ the terrifick ideas with which she
“ has lately been agitated, I fear your
“ sudden appearance may revive them.
“ Suffer me to make the necessary arrangements. It would be wrong to
“ employ

“ employ the only means from which
“ we may hope a favourable effect,
“ without proper precaution.”

I suffered the ardency of my impatience to be subdued by my sister's sensible reasoning, who instantly left us, to prepare this interview. She soon returned to inform us Henrietta was in a profound sleep, which always followed her violent paroxysms, and was absolutely necessary to the re-establishment of her exhausted strength.

I asked whether I might not take advantage of this circumstance, at least to satisfy my eyes, and familiarize them to the afflicting object. My God! I had formed but a faint idea of her situation, it was deplorable: she was fast bound to the bed, as they were fearful she might make some attempt on her life; her hair was dishevelled, her cloaths loose, her linen dirty and torn, her bosom discoloured by bruises, and her hands stained with blood; her face was wet from the abundant tears she incessantly shed; the beautiful tint of her skin was faded, and her lips, that formerly were like the budding rose, now appeared deadly and livid. From time to

time she started and shook so violently, that I thought she would awake; but Hortensia told me she was always thus agitated: from which she supposed she was not more calm when asleep, than at any other time, and that we might speak without constraint; but I could not support the melancholy scene, my heart was oppressed, and I hastened out of the room, fearful my sighs, which I could no longer suppress, might awaken this sorrowful victim of seduction. Vile wretches! I exclaimed, who make such crimes a sport, come, view the doleful effects of perfidy.

The tender caresses and innocent prattle of my son affected me; but did not afford me any consolation.

Hortensia, who had left us for some hours, came to inform me that every thing was as we could wish, that Henrietta had awoke more serene than she had been for some time; she had told her, that during her sleep, she thought I entered her room in a cloud, bearing an olive-branch, in token of peace, and that I spoke to her in the most mild and consolatory language; that I placed myself at her side, gave her a kiss, and disap-

disappeared, leaving behind me a long streak of light that reached to Heaven.

"Perhaps," added she, sighing, "he is released from the woes we have made him suffer."

"No, no, my dear girl," said Hortensia, "he lives, and is ready to realize the representation of your dream; he is in the house, and"---
"Stop, stop, my dear friend," cried Henrietta, quickly, "be not so unkind as to deceive your unhappy sister."---"I do not deceive you, my love---in an hour, in an instant, you may be satisfied of the truth of my promises, and your heart solaced by his tender endearments."

Hortensia stopped, to judge the effect this news would have. Henrietta elevated her eyes to Heaven, and clasped her hands in silence; then dropping her head on her bosom, "Is the generous soul really in the house?" Hortensia hesitated answering, but observing no mark of terror to accompany the idea, she said, I was with her mother, and only waited her orders to approach.

“ My orders !” she repeated : “ Is
“ he positively with my mother ?” —
“ Yes, my love, and your son is with
“ him.” — “ Ah ! perhaps he would
“ not repulse me, if I were to approach
“ him on my knees.” Then looking
at the state of her cloaths, she said, “ I
“ am not in a state to appear ; I must
“ dress myself more appropriately to
“ my situation, like a criminal wo-
“ man, who is going before her
“ judge.”

“ You will only find him a tender
“ husband, who sincerely feels your
“ sorrows,” replied Hortensia. Hen-
rietta then raised her head, asked for a
mourning dress, from which she tore
all the ornaments ; then arranging her
hair so as to hang loose over her shoul-
ders, she covered her head with a large
black hood, and pulled it over her
face ; she wished to rise, but her legs
refusing their office, she sat calmly on
the bed, waiting my arrival.

Hortensia asked her whether she de-
sired I should be introduced, she nodded
assent without speaking, as if she was
afraid the ideas she had collected might
escape.

escape. Hortensia therefore sent for me, and I attended, accompanied by Mrs. de Rozieres.

I stopt on coming to the door as Henrietta appeared to be in profound thought. "Here he is," said Hortensia; on hearing this, she cast a look towards the upper part, as if she really expected the apparition of an angel descending from Heaven; they beckoned me to come nearer, and fearing I should alarm her too much, by throwing myself on my knees, I seated myself near, unable to speak from my extreme emotion. She looked at me, and suddenly turned her eyes away; she reclined her head on her bosom, and remained a long time silent; at length roused, as it were, from a deep lethargy, she fixed her eyes on me, and said, "Sir, why are you not in mourning, you have lost your wife—I have lost my husband, (she sighed heartily) I have lost him for ever; is it not true, Hortensia?" She threw her arms about my sister, and hid her face in her friendly bosom. Her sighs were frequent, her breathing was quick, and she pressed my sister violently. Grief almost suffocated me
at

at this distressing scene, I could not repress it, I wept aloud, and every one present was similarly affected.

The room vibrated with our sobs ;
“ No, my dear Henrietta, no, you
“ have not lost the object of your love,”
I said, taking one of her hands, which
I detached from my sister : she suffered
me to retain it : “ Look at me,” I
added, “ recollect your de Boncœur, it
“ is him, it is your——” the name of
husband expired on my lips. She
looked at me, and placing her finger on
her mouth, smiled unmeaningly. The
rest of her countenance, however, pour-
trayed affliction. Tears trickled down
her once blooming cheeks ; she leaned
forward to kiss me, I held out my arms
to receive her, but suddenly she gave a
violent shriek, jumped out of bed, and
ran out of the room, evincing the greatest
terror ; her mother and sister followed,
while I remained in an agony of grief.

My strength was absorbed, and my
mind in such a state as not to present a
single idea, when Hortensia appeared, I
could only fix my eyes on her to enquire
what had passed. “ She has relapsed,” said
my sister, “ into her usual terrors ; she
“ imagines

“ imagines the Marquis has assumed
“ your figure, to deceive her again, and
“ take her away ; she says it is not the
“ first time he has employed this stratagem, but it shall never succeed any
“ more, and she particularly requests
“ it may not be mentioned to her elder
“ sister, as she is in league with him.”

Hortensia assured me, however, she was now much calmer, and as the night was far advanced, she desired me to retire, which I agreed to, not having slept the three preceding nights.

“ Sweet sleep, death’s image, to thy arms I fly,
“ Pleas’d without life to live, glad without
“ death to die.”

But, O Heaven ! what a melancholy awakening awaited me ! Was I to come from such a distance, and in such haste, to be the witness, and perhaps the cause of the greatest misfortune ?

They had not attempted to disturb my repose ; but when I awoke, I found they had been engaged some hours in seeking the unfortunate maniac, who had taken advantage of her nurse dosing, to escape. The doors all being locked and bolted, she could not be out of the house, which, however, was searched
in

in vain. All her cloaths being in the room, we were certain she had only her shift on, this also was a cause of uneasiness, though she could not possibly be far off. We continued our search the whole day and the following night without success.

We were equally puzzled and afflicted; on the second day a servant having brought more wood than we wanted, we desired him to put it in a closet that was in the wainscot, and on opening of it he gave a violent scream, which drawing our attention towards him, we also went to the closet, and there we found Henrietta. We never should have thought of looking for her there, not thinking it was big enough for a child of six years. We were obliged to pull down the boards to take her out, but, O God! in what a state; want of air had suffocated her; the pressure had stoped the circulation of her blood, and we could scarcely reduce her limbs to their natural situation.

Pungent salts, and other stimulating applications were made use of without effect. We then placed her in the open air, and soon discovered a faint motion in the
region

region of the heart; a moment after, she opened her eyes, and fixed them on me; she sighed, I pressed my lips to her's: would to God she had inhaled my soul! but I had received her's, and the sigh she gave was the last of her life.

I could not, however, persuade myself she was dead. I knew that suffocations produce a long suspension of vital power, which is often mistaken for positive extinction. I would not permit the last offices to be performed, I could not think a death so sudden and without convulsions could be real; I carried her to bed, and never moved from her for eight and forty hours. From my eyes being fixed on her almost the whole of this time, I sometimes thought I saw some weak motion, which instantly communicated a stronger to my heart; but I soon discovered it only originated in my imagination.

The horrible effects of dissolution now manifested themselves; my hopes were vanished, yet I could not tear myself from the livid body; I incessantly covered it with kisses.

They

They at length persuaded me to leave it, conditionally that no one but my sister should enshroud it, and perform the last duties.

The utmost caution was observed to prevent me from hearing the necessary preparations for interment; I, however, heard them nailing the coffin that was to enclose the remains of the most unfortunate of women for ever, and every stroke of the hammer that met my ear, painfully vibrated to my heart.——

Let me for a while suspend these gloomy details, perhaps your sensibility is as tired as my pen, with the recital of so many melancholy events, and which have succeeded each other so rapidly; the number yet remaining to be traced will not allow of my giving way too much to sorrowful reflections; and I must think of concluding the sad task, I promised to perform, without considering the woe it may excite before I finish. I thought it would afford me consolation, and that

“ Ev’n the soft sorrow of remember’d woe
“ A not unpleasing sadness might bestow ;”

but

but I have found it has at times excited the most excruciating sensations of unhappiness. Enumerating every sad incident of my life, is not the way to forget them. I will endeavour, however, to retain the courage that has thus far supported me, and pursue my narrative in my next letter.

Farewell.

~~~~~  
LETTER XXII.

*The same to the same.*

AT the fatal moment that the sad remains of an unfortunate wife were to be separated from me, I was informed a stranger wished to speak with me.—  
“Who is he? what attention can he expect from a man absorbed in grief?  
“desire him to call another time.”

La France, to whom I gave this message, returned almost immediately, saying; the man insisted upon seeing me, observing that a moment lost might be fatal to a person extremely dear to me.—  
“What, have I another loss to fear?  
“are not my misfortunes yet at their height?”

“ height ? Introduce him, and tell him  
“ not to detain me long.”

“ I will not,” said the stranger, entering at this moment. “ Mr. de Rozieres, Sir, unable to conquer his  
“ impatience, has imprudently returned  
“ to France ; all his movements were  
“ undoubtedly watched, for the moment he arrived, he was arrested by  
“ the Marechausée of Lille ; I was  
“ one of those employed on this occasion, and I have just returned from  
“ the Conciergerie, where I conducted  
“ him, and he fears he will soon be  
“ sacrificed to his enemy’s revenge ; he  
“ had only time to whisper your name,  
“ and place of abode in my ear, and  
“ to beg your interference.”

I was so far from expecting this terrible news, that I had suffered the stranger to speak before my sister and Mrs. de Rozieres. What a shock for this unfortunate parent ! at the moment the earth was going to receive the dear remains of one of her daughters, her son was likely to perish on the scaffold ? What accumulated losses ! What was to be done ? Which was to engage my  
atten-



attention? Was I to deprive myself of the melancholy satisfaction of rendering the last honour to a wife, whose misfortunes endeared her memory to me? Could I suffer a brother to perish, who had sacrificed his life to revenge my honour?

A mother's alarm, and a moment's reflection determined to acquit myself of the latter duty. I set off instantly, and travelling all night with the utmost diligence, I was the next morning at Versailles by the time the King usually rose; I desired his chief attendant to announce my arrival, and to obtain permission for me to see him while he was yet in bed. I was instantly admitted. This amiable Monarch seemed shocked at my appearance, and wept on being informed of my late misfortunes. He knew the Marquis's family were accelerating the process of the law against his murderer; and having once received judgment, he could not pardon him without violating the sacred oath that proscribed duelling. He immediately directed an order to the Governor of the Conciergerie to convey de M. de

to the Bastile, and wrote a letter himself to the Governor of that fortress, enjoining him not to deliver the prisoner to any one who did not present a similar letter written entirely by himself.

This exemplary sovereign would not listen to the effusions of my gratitude ; and I flew, if not to deliver the imprudent de Rozieres, at least to secure his life. I conducted him to the Bastile, and gave the King's letter to the Governor, who seeing his declared protection, promised to answer for my brother-in-law's safety with his head. I then dispatched the faithful la France to Mrs. de Rozieres, informing her of what had passed, and desiring her not to be alarmed. The same evening I attended the King's couchée, and he detained me till the rest of the company had retired.

He seemed as much interested for me and my family, as if I had been his own offspring. “ In what a short time  
“ your unfortunate family has been  
“ dispersed. If a favourite passion  
“ seizing the heart of the father of a  
“ family, can give rise to so many evils,  
“ and occasion the unhappiness of such  
“ a num-

“ a number of persons, what immense  
“ disorder must follow, when a mo-  
“ narch is led astray by passion, as his  
“ conduct influences every order of so-  
“ ciety within his dominion? Wretch-  
“ ed must be the consequences of a  
“ king’s error! But let us converse on  
“ the subject ever nearest my heart.  
“ You have not been successful? am I  
“ not right? Do not flatter me, you  
“ have never heard my name pro-  
“ nounced but with horror?”

I could not conceal the truth: I, however, amplified upon the merchant’s conduct at Rotterdam, said, he spoke of his Majesty with the greatest respect, and so did many others; but the new engagements they had formed prevented them from returning.

“ This merchant’s sentiments,” said the King, “ shall not be unrewarded; he was prosecuted in my name, and his generosity should meet recompense;” he then took from a little casket fifty thousand livres, and gave them to me, saying, “ transmit this to him.”——“ I have two hundred thousand crowns of your Majesty’s from which I can take——”

“ My



“ My friend, I never reclaim what I  
“ give ; they were destined for the  
“ worthy, and they cannot be better  
“ employed than in your possession.  
“ I insist on your keeping them for  
“ your own use.”—“ But, Sire,”—I  
was so astonished and embarrassed at  
receiving a gift of this importance,  
that I could not proceed.—“ Will you  
“ not receive a present from your  
“ friend ? I know you want it, and  
“ that riches have no great effect on  
“ you, but the manner in which I  
“ am convinced you will employ them,  
“ may contribute to your happiness.  
“ Go, go, de Boncœur, and console  
“ your imprudent brother-in-law : his  
“ revenge was just ; as to myself I  
“ pardon him, but some respect is  
“ due to the illustrious family of the  
“ deceased, and to the laws ; I will  
“ devise some means to give him his  
“ liberty without offending either.”

It was late when I left this friendly  
monarch, and after a few hour's rest,  
I set off for Paris, and on the road I  
revolved how I could best employ the  
sudden fortune I had acquired. I re-  
solved to establish an hospital for old  
persons

persons of rank, who might not have the means of support, and for decayed tradesmen of respectable character. I instantly drew up a plan, and presented it to the King on my return to Versailles: he received it with the most flattering approbation. "I would wish you, however," he said, "to consult Mrs. de Montjoy, who long since suggested a similar idea, and whatever you determine on, shall be established by law."

I immediately waited on Mrs. de Montjoy, who approved my plan; "There is," she said, "an addition I wish to make; let it also be an asylum for young victims of seduction, whose families are too severe to receive them. I do not, however, mean those hacknied in debauchery; repentance is with them the last resource." I coincided in this addition, from a conviction that many indulge in promiscuous love, rather from necessity than inclination.

"Your sister-in-law, Mrs. de Boncœur," continued this excellent woman, "is the person whom I should like to be the superior of this community;

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“munity; the Abbess of the convent  
“in which she resides, is my relation,  
“and speaks in high praise of her abilities and piety, but I fear she is too  
“rigid; tell me your opinion candidly.”

“It is true, Madam, my sister-in-law has ever been extremely austere,  
“but this arises from a natural elevation of mind, which starts at the least  
“attempt to make her yield. At the  
“idea of subordination she revolts, but  
“no one is more generous and compassionate to those who are under  
“her direction. Naturally mild and  
“complaisant, she is never otherwise  
“but when placed in an inferior rank;  
“and I can venture to say, her pride  
“is as incapable of abusing authority,  
“as of submitting to it.”

“Since such is your opinion,” said Mrs. de Montjoy, “mine is decidedly  
“in her favour, and I will instantly  
“write to the Pope for a dispensation  
“of her vows. We will ask the King  
“for those two religious houses now  
“vacant, which we will speedily fit  
“up, and in a short time they will be  
“ready



“ ready to receive those for whom they  
“ are intended.”

I will not trouble you with the regulations of our institution, suffice it to say, the dictates of humanity were strictly followed, and every thing that could render its objects comfortable and happy was adopted with the zealoufness of genuine charity.

After having visited my brother-in-law, I hastened to his mother and sister to inform them of what had passed; they were delighted with the plan, and we began to hope for happier days than we had experienced.

A great change, however, was about to take place in our affairs; and though it was only natural and perhaps necessary, yet it was unexpected, as Providence had not yet withdrawn the veil, that covers its impenetrable designs.

Mrs. de Rozières, our new prioress, my sister, my son, and myself, went to Versailles, where I presented them to the King, who received them with great kindness, but particularly my son, whom he took in his arms, and promised him his august protection.

Mrs. de Montjoy invited us to dinner, and made the ladies promise to abide at her house during their stay at Versailles. The King regretted the impossibility of giving de Rozières's his liberty, but intreated us to confide in him, and gave us permission to visit the prisoner as often as we wished.

After passing a month in preparations for our new establishment, we all retired to it. The arrangements were so plain and exact, as to render the administration a pleasing employment, which, without such wise regulations, would have been attended with extreme trouble. We soon received a number of pensioners, which was the only name we gave them, in order to prevent any sorrowful or humiliating idea of their situation.

We again perceived the horizon of happiness, and the dawn of more serene days presented itself to our view: our hearts, which had been so long agitated by such violent and sudden shocks, began to feel, not perfect tranquillity, (which could not so immediately succeed the recent storms) but more equal

equal and softer emotions, indicating an approaching calm. We were not joyous, but we felt more pleasure than uneasiness. Melancholy is the convalescence of grief, and we required a species of regimen, before we could enjoy the full glow of felicity.

While we were indulging in these flattering hopes, de Rozières suddenly rushed into the room. After embracing us alternately with much ardour, he informed us he had escaped from the Bastile with the utmost ease, and without any risk. This account damped the joy we felt at seeing him. I remarked, his imprudence might forfeit him the King's favour, and he would find more difficulty to avoid his enemies' vengeance, than escaping from a prison, which he should have considered as an asylum. He desired us not to be uneasy, for the Governor had suggested the idea. This I believed to be true from some conversation I had with the King. He also informed us he had assisted a charming woman to escape, who, like him, was persecuted by an illustrious and powerful family, that she was in a chaise at the bottom of the

13                      avenue,



avenue, and hoped we would afford her an asylum.

The women applauded his conduct, and seemed interested for the object, but I, who foresaw what might be the consequence, was more reserved in praise, and asked him whether he never would call reflection to his assistance. "However," I said, "as the fault is committed, we must think now only of repairing it; it certainly evinces your goodness of heart, and I shall make it the ground of excusing you to the King. But come, let us visit your *protégée*."

As we walked up the avenue, de Rozières made a sign to the postillion to come forward; as the chaise approached, I observed the lady endeavoured to hide her face, and betrayed various symptoms of terror; suddenly she screamed to the postillion to turn the chaise and drive away. On this, we ran up to her, when, on discovering it was Mrs. de Charmes, I was not astonished at her fears.

This event, which some may consider as one of those surprising combinations, called chance, I attributed to a  
more

more respectable cause; and this idea allaying the first emotions of indignation, I resumed sufficient calmness to speak to her. "Be not alarmed, Madam, and permit me to remind you, you have no reason to suppose we should treat you ill, because you have fallen into our power."

"I do not," she replied with some confusion, "doubt your generosity, but after having been the cause of all your misfortunes, your pity should have some bounds."—"Humanity knows none, Madam, and that is sufficient to oblige me to assist you; besides I could not severely treat that woman whom my father loved."

Mrs. de Rozières and her daughter, I feared, would not think with me, and it was with difficulty I could moderate my brother-in-law's anger. In fact, though I ultimately hoped to conciliate them, how could I propose for them to receive a woman, whom they could not but consider as their most cruel enemy? How was I to oppose their just refusal?—To avoid this, I introduced her sud-

denly; the most frightful apparition could not have affected them so strongly, and I took this moment of astonishment to explain my designs. Supposing my example would have most authority with my sister, I addressed her first, and won her consent. Mrs. de Rozieres and her daughter, unwilling to be less generous, assured Mrs. de Charmes, though they could not promise totally to forget the past, her treatment should be such as not to make her regret falling in their power.

“ Providence,” exclaimed Mrs. de Charmes, “ has certainly directed this  
“ meeting, and I sincerely return the  
“ Almighty thanks for it, as only me  
“ can disclose that, on which depends  
“ your happiness; and my sincerity  
“ shall be the proof of my gratitude.”

At this moment, the faithful la France, whom I had made steward of our establishment, came to inform me a new pensioner, very ill and very infirm, had just arrived, I directed him to supply him with every necessary, but to excuse me for the present, as I was interestingly engaged.

We



We were now all extremely anxious to listen to Mrs. de Charmes, and on expressing our wish that she would commence her recital, she said, we required a most humiliating task, as what she should relate would much debase her in our view, and painfully affect us, without affording instruction.

“ I was never married to the Duke  
 “ de —, neither am I d’Ombre-  
 “ ville’s sister: we were less respectably  
 “ united; but the first ardour of our  
 “ desires having subsided, he advised  
 “ me to follow the Duke, by whom I  
 “ should certainly be protected. The  
 “ event that deranged our designs is  
 “ well known to you, and I thought  
 “ the loss well supplied, by the recep-  
 “ tion I met from your father. Fear-  
 “ ing his kindness might be but tran-  
 “ sient, I endeavoured to insure its per-  
 “ manency, by attaching him to me,  
 “ by a more seducing sentiment, than  
 “ that of friendship. I studied his  
 “ character, and the virtues I disco-  
 “ vered he possessed, for a time checked  
 “ my intentions, by the veneration  
 “ they inspired; but dreading to expe-  
 “ rience the misery I had more than

“ once suffered, by my own miscon-  
“ duct, furnished me with motives  
“ that I thought would justify my con-  
“ duct. I did not think Mrs. de  
“ Boncœur would consider the loss of  
“ her husband’s affection as of much  
“ importance, as she evinced more in-  
“ difference than love towards him, and  
“ when I perceived the uneasiness the  
“ loss was likely to occasion her, I had  
“ proceeded too far to retract.

“ I was well aware that the coque-  
“ tries by which ordinary minds are  
“ seduced, would not assist in the con-  
“ quest of Mr. de Boncœur; I was  
“ convinced that to win his heart, I  
“ must acquire his esteem, and I soon  
“ captivated both. Every attempt to  
“ dismiss me, rendered me more dear  
“ to him, and I had formed the highest  
“ hopes, when I received a letter from  
“ Versailles that excited extreme unea-  
“ siness. One of the minister’s secre-  
“ taries, with whom I had formerly  
“ lived upon a most intimate footing,  
“ informed me, that some persons  
“ badly disposed towards me, had ob-  
“ tained a *lettre-de-cacher* to confine  
“ me for the rest of my days; I had no  
“ doubt

“doubt that it was done by some of  
“the Duke’s friends, who had threat-  
“ened more than once, to treat me  
“thus, if I did not relinquish my false  
“claims; but by attributing it to other  
“persons, I thought would serve my  
“designs better. In fact, Mr. de  
“Boncœur, indignant at such conduct,  
“resolved to place me out of the reach  
“of such machinations, and at the  
“same time assured me, he was cer-  
“tain his beloved son, was not a party  
“concerned.

“The secretary, who had commu-  
“nicated this intelligence, was pleased  
“with my arrival at Paris, but expressed  
“much anger at my new conquest,  
“as he wished to resume his former  
“intimacy with me. This wicked  
“man, resolving to remove the ob-  
“stacle to his desires, engaged some of  
“those venal wretches, which every  
“defective government employs, to  
“watch and report the proceedings of  
“their fellow citizens, to inform the  
“ministers, that Mr. de Boncœur had  
“spoken contemptuously against the  
“King and his government. His re-  
“fusing the office of privy-counsellor,  
I 6 “and



“ and the patent of nobility, gave credit to what this impostor asserted, and fatal would have been the effects, had not the most magnanimous of human beings demonstrated on this occasion the extent of filial tenderness.

“ By this noble action, you rendered our designs almost complete, and restored those hopes, your presence at Paris had nearly destroyed. Your sister’s arrival, I thought a favourable opportunity to requite d’Ombreville for his assistance in my projects. I resolved he should obtain this rich prize.

“ The blind deference your father had for my wishes, made him consent to this union, which would have been concluded, but for your return to Charenton. Your wisdom discovered to Hortensia the views of her miserable lover; and when he informed me of her change in behaviour towards him, I advised him to take her away clandestinely, as the only resource; for though on a meeting with your father, he might have gained your consent, I was fearful  
“ of

“ of bringing you together, as you  
“ would irreversibly have destroyed my  
“ projects.

“ After having concerted this plan  
“ with d’Ombreville, I sent off a mes-  
“ senger to inform you of the enter-  
“ prize, when I knew it would be al-  
“ ready executed; being well assured;  
“ that if we once obtained Hortensia,  
“ your father would instantly unite her  
“ to d’Ombreville.”

I here interrupted Mrs. de Charmes,  
by observing I did not perfectly under-  
stand this explanation. “ By inform-  
“ ing you, your father was the chief  
“ director and assistant in this enter-  
“ prize, I conceived you would not  
“ think yourself entitled to pursue the  
“ ravisher; and to prepare against this  
“ inconvenience, I made d’Ombreville  
“ disguise himself in one of Mr. de  
“ Boncœur’s dresses, that even Hor-  
“ tensia might be deceived by the ob-  
“ scurity of the night.”——“ Pro-  
“ ceed, proceed, say, was it not my  
“ father who fell?”——“ No, Sir,  
“ no, it was only the guilty ravisher,  
“ who met his punishment in the com-  
“ mission of his crime, and I was af-  
“ terwards

“terwards constantly with your father  
“until I was arrested returning from  
“Versailles with the secretary, whose  
“deception had been discovered, and  
“who has no doubt been punished.  
“As to myself, supposing he had com-  
“municated some important secrets to  
“me, I was conducted to the Bastille,  
“where I should have remained till  
“now, but for Mr. de Rozieres.”

“O God,” I exclaimed, “my fa-  
“ther is then living!” and pressing  
Mrs. de Charmes to my bosom, I em-  
braced her with as much fervour as if  
she had been my best and most benefi-  
cent friend. Her errors were all for-  
gotten. Of what consequence was it,  
who communicated this delightful intel-  
ligence? Whoever it might be was to  
me like an angel of peace.

My sister, Mrs. de Rozieres, and her  
son, were equally delighted with my-  
self, and embraced Mrs. de Charmes  
with ardour. Mrs. de Boncœur, how-  
ever, did not follow our example, but  
unwilling to appear less generous on this  
great occurrence, promised her enemy  
with that noble candour of which she  
was ever capable, she would freely par-  
don



don every injury, if what she had said was strictly true.

“What,” said Mrs. de Charmes, “could induce me to humble myself as I have done, if I did not hope the avowal of my faults would procure that forgiveness, which I could only obtain by true confession and sincere repentance?”

The unhappy woman’s countenance betrayed the strongest traits of confusion and shame; but the impropriety of her past conduct being effaced by the happy communication she had made, we promised her, every thing should be buried in the deepest oblivion.

Our tenderness was now forcibly revived for an object we knew not where to meet or where to find? To know he lived, at once relieved my heart from a horrid weight, and gave my mind such force, as to make me exclaim, “never will I again despair.”

Farewell.

## LETTER XIV.

*The same to the same.*

AT the conclusion of Mrs. de Charmes's narrative, the night was far spent, and we separated to retire to sleep, but which the excess of my happiness prevented me from enjoying; and I arose when la France came to inform me, that the new pensioner was dying, and wished to converse with a clergyman. I told him, I would instantly attend, and directed him to desire the ladies would come to his chamber, and assist at the sorrowful ceremony. I dressed myself quickly, and hastened to the dying man, and on entering, was astonished to find my sister, Mrs. de Rozieres, and her daughter, kneeling round his bed. I also approached—Bountiful Heaven! I was in my father's arms in a moment. How excessive would have been our joy, how inebriating our delight, had this meeting been attended with less melancholy circumstances; but fear chilled our hearts, and sighs replaced the screams of joy we first sent forth.

My

My father, equally affected with ourselves, endeavoured to express his happiness, but so feebly as to denote his powers were nearly exhausted. Perceiving Mrs. de Charmes at a distance, he said, in a faint voice, "come nearer, " Madam, I accuse no one of my errors, and I should be unjust to nourish resentment, since Heaven seems " to have pardoned me, by letting me " have the happiness of again embracing my children, and finding " them still attached to me.—My son, " my daughter, Mrs. de Rozieres, " and particularly you, Madam," looking at his wife, "I ask your " forgiveness, for the bad example " I gave by my conduct, and all the " anxiety I have occasioned to you; " your compassion leads me to hope " for the same of the judge before " whom I shall soon appear, overwhelmed with my own crimes, and " those I have given rise to-----O, " my dear son, your kindness and " friendship render my last moments " happy—if Heaven had permitted— " But no, God is just.—Retire my " children, do not soften me more; let " me



“ me nobly pay the tribute I owe to  
“ nature——the moment is near——”

He became speechless, and apparently lifeless: we now thought we had lost him for ever.

The physician, however, assured us it was only a swoon, which might eventually contribute to his recovery; and desiring us to withdraw, he soon restored him; but he was so weak, we were not permitted to see him again that day.

Cruel constraint! dreadful necessity! this day was the longest and most painful of my life. The most violent fever could not have agitated me more than the anxiety I suffered. At about mid-day, the physician gave us favourable hopes, which hourly increased, and the next evening we were permitted to see my father, on condition we should not speak, nor stay longer than five minutes.

The next morning the strength of our beloved invalid, and our hopes were augmented, we passed two hours with him at different times, and four days afterwards, he received us sitting up in a chair. This was a moment of general joy,

joy, even the servants, and our pensioners, many of whom were borne down with their own sorrows, seemed happy. Even you, my friend, who have followed me through all misfortunes, can have been but weakly interested by them, if this event does not warm your heart, and call the tear of pleasure into your eyes.

When my father was perfectly recovered, he told us, that having vainly endeavoured to discover her, for whom he had abandoned us all, he became a prey to deep sorrow. "My love," he continued, "not having its base in virtue, was soon banished by reflection, but I feared to return to my family; I therefore resolved to lead a wandering life in foreign countries, when I heard of your new establishment, and learning Mrs. de Montjoy was particularly concerned in its foundation, I waited on her, confessed my errors, and claimed her protection. She at first seemed much astonished, and was silent for some minutes, then felicitating me on the plan I had adopted, as she conceived it promised success, she instantly ordered  
" a car-

“ a carriage to convey me here, and  
“ smiling gave me an admission ticket,  
“ feeling, I suppose, the joy our meeting  
“ would occasion.

“ Knowing you was the director,”  
he added, “ I imagined your refusing  
“ to see me, arose from your having  
“ been informed of my arrival ; this  
“ mark of contempt, stung me to  
“ the soul, and reduced me as near the  
“ grave as you have beheld me ; your  
“ conduct has, however, convinced me  
“ I was wrong. Ah ! ” he exclaimed  
with transport, “ I will never again  
“ leave you ; our separation was the  
“ first and greatest of my misfortunes ;  
“ your presence, would have been a se-  
“ cond conscience to me. . What accu-  
“ mulated and fatal errors would your  
“ virtue have preserved me from ! ”

“ Enough, enough, my dear father,  
“ to probe your wounds thus deeply  
“ will retard their cure ; let us indulge  
“ in the hopes of that happiness pre-  
“ sent circumstances seem to indicate.”

We had passed several days in the de-  
lights of mutual felicity, when an event  
occurred which seemed to threaten its  
existence ; but the circumstance though  
unpleasant,



unpleasant, contributed to the display of Mrs. de Boncœur's naturally noble sentiments.

The same officer who had conducted me to Vincennes, waited on me, and I trembled to think it might be some severe order against de Rozieres; but the Marquis's family finding he was signally protected by the King, had sacrificed their vengeance to their ambition, and relinquished their proceedings against him. The *lettre-de-cachet* with which the officer was charged, was against Mrs. de Charmes, enjoining her under the most rigorous penalties, to seclude herself in the house of which Mrs. de Boncœur was superior.

My father and his wife were perfectly reconciled to each other, but never lived agreeable to the laws of Hymen; their attachment, however, and mutual friendship, was not less sincere. Mrs. de Charmes seems to have repented of her former follies, and leads an exemplary life.

On the marriage of my sister with de Rozieres, which took place, soon after my father's recovery, I resigned  
the

the direction of the asylum to him, and retired to this spot.

For your frequent and affectionate letters, I have received since the commencement of this narrative, accept my most heart-felt thanks; may you long enjoy with your family the felicity and prosperity for which you are so thankful to the Divinity, and when your engagements will admit you to secede from the tumultuous pleasures of society, where

— e'en while fashion's arts decoy,  
The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy?"

Come and share with me the placid delights and serene pleasures of retirement.

Farewell,

LOUIS DE BONCŒUR.

FINIS.



